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LACKINGTON's  
CONFESSIONS.

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PRICE TWO SHILLINGS

46. 2





THE  
CONFESSIONS  
OF  
J. LACKINGTON,  
IN A  
SERIES OF LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
TWO LETTERS  
ON THE  
BAD CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING DAUGHTERS  
EDUCATED AT BOARDING-SCHOOLS.

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But then grew *Reason* dark, that *she* no more  
Could the fair forms of Good and Truth discern;  
*Batts* they became, who Eagles were before,  
And this they got by their *desire* to learn.

SIR J. DAVIES.

"The soul's dark cottage batter'd and decay'd  
Lets in new light through chinks which time has made."

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY RICHARD EDWARDS,  
*Crane Court, Fleet Street,*

FOR THE AUTHOR; AND SOLD BY G. LACKINGTON, ALLEN,  
AND CO. TEMPLE OF THE MUSES, FINSBURY-SQUARE,  
AND BY ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS IN THE  
UNITED KINGDOM.

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1804.

[Price in Boards, Two Shillings.] 6.



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## PREFACE.

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SEVERAL of my friends have thought that, if the following Letters were made public they might prove useful as a warning to others not to fall into those errors which had nearly proved fatal to me ; and, also, as an alarm to some of those who are already fallen into that dreadful state of infidelity from which, by the great mercy of God, I am happily escaped.

They were also of opinion, that as I had publicly ridiculed a very large and respectable body of Christians, and thus, in fact, made a *thrust* at the very *vitals* of Christianity itself, by this means giving occasion to speculative infidels and practical unbelievers to triumph and blaspheme ; that, therefore, my recantation ought to be made as public as possible, and that by so doing I should give great pleasure

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pleasure to many real Christians, who, with the angels in heaven, will rejoice over a repenting sinner.

To the preceding reasons the author is obliged to add, that without publishing something of the kind, he thinks he should not have performed his duty to God or man: nor have had any just ground to expect pardon from either—such is his sense and abhorrence of the pernicious and infidel tendency of those parts of his *Memoirs*, in which, through the side of Methodism, he even wounds the Church of England, and attacks the whole of evangelical piety.

In order that my readers might be able to form clear ideas of the state of my mind through the whole progress of my present happy change, I thought it best to insert two Letters which I wrote while I was an infidel; and others written during my gradual discovery of the truths which are revealed in the scriptures. And I request my readers to take notice, that the first twenty-four Letters were all written before I was convinced of the truth of those doctrines which are taught by the Methodists, and also by our Reformers, as appears by the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England.

I found it necessary to make some small alterations in some of the Letters. I have divided what  
was



was originally sent to a friend in one long Letter into two. In the Letter on a death-bed repentance, which was written four years since, I have introduced a quotation from the Farmer's Boy, a poem, not published when that Letter was written. In some of the other Letters additional quotations from the poets have been inserted since they were sent to my friends.

• I have called my old acquaintances by fictitious names, because I would not publicly expose either those that are dead, or such as are still living; and I presume no one has any reason to complain; for should any of them be known by my sketches, it can only be by such as were acquainted with the originals.

In one or two instances I have, for particular reasons, made use of a fictitious vehicle to introduce real facts, reasonings, reflections, &c.

It may be necessary to inform my readers, that I am not (as some suppose), again become a partner in the bookselling trade. It is now five years since I made over the whole of that business to Messrs. George Lackington, Allen, and Co. since which time I have had no share or interest in it; and I am very sorry that they last summer published a new edition of the Memoirs of my Life; but I believe they had no intention to disoblige the Methodists, but merely published it as a matter of course to promote

promote their trade. And although I at that time was not pleased with its being republished, yet I did not see the evil tendency which that work certainly has in so strong a light as I have since.

Perhaps, as this opportunity offers, I ought to inform the public, that Mr. George Lackington is a third cousin of mine ; and that from thirteen years of age he was brought up in my shop. Mr. Allen was also brought up from a boy in my shop. And the other partners were taken into the trade by me in seventeen hundred and ninety-four. I hope the reader will pardon this digression.

This work being printed in London, and I living about one hundred and twenty miles distant, some errors of the press have been made, which the reader is requested to correct.

I am,

Readers,

Your very sincere wellwisher,

J. LACKINGTON.

*Alveston, Dec. 10th, 1803.*

LACKINGTON'S

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# LACKINGTON'S

## CONFESSIONS.

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### LETTER I.

————— O well thou knowest,  
Who knowest all things, with what welcome toil,  
What pleasing assiduity I search'd  
Thy heavenly word, to learn thy heavenly will.

\* \* \* \* \*

In all thy sacred institutions, Lord,  
Thy Sabbaths with peculiar wisdom shine,  
First and high argument, creation done,  
Of thy benign solicitude for man.

THOUGHTS IN PRISON.

————— Inward state of mind ; calm region once,  
And full of peace, now tost and turbulent ;  
For understanding rul'd not.

PARADISE LOST.

Repentance, heav'nly monitress, reclaims  
————— The wanderer from his dangerous maze  
To tread her peaceful paths and seek his God.

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

—————" Trembling I retreat ;  
My prostrate soul again adores her God."

SIR,

**I**N my Memoirs I told you that I married Miss Dorcas Turton. This girl had for some years divided her spare hours between devotion and novel reading ;

reading ; on Sundays she would attend the sermons of two or three of those who are called Calvinist-Methodist preachers, the intervals were often filled up by reading of novels : and after her return from the Tabernacle in the evening the novel was resumed, and perhaps not quitted until she had seen the hero and heroine happily married, which often kept her out of bed until morning. On other evenings also she would often hear a sermon at the Tabernacle, and devote the remainder of the night to reading " Tales of love and Maids forsaken."

I had no sooner married this young woman than Mr. Wesley's people began to prophecy that I should soon lose all my religion. This prophecy I must confess was too soon fulfilled. And although she was not the sole cause of it, yet as I often was prevailed upon to hear her read those gay, frothy narratives, I, by degrees, began to lose my relish for more important subjects ; and it was not long before novels, romances, and poets occupied a considerable part of our time, so that I even neglected my shop ; for being so much delighted with those fairy regions, I could scarce bear the idea of business : I also sometimes neglected the preaching at the Foundery, at other times hurried home, impatient until I had again got into the realms of fiction. Some months passed away in this manner. At last I was roused from those dreams, and again I paid attention to my trade.

I observed, in my Memoirs, that Mr. Denis visited me during my long illness, when I was again constantly to be found in my shop. He often called, and having little to do, and being fond of disputation, he would seat himself on the counter, and, as occasion offered, attack me, or any of my customers, on our religious opinions. He was acquainted with the various controversies which have divided the Christian world ; and appeared to take delight in pulling systems to pieces, without establishing any thing. He owned that he was greatly attached

to



to alchymical and mystical authors ; but he would confess that, although he believed some of their writings were dictated by the Spirit of God, yet that he did not pretend to understand them. He allowed that the authors of the Old and New Testaments, sometimes wrote as the Spirit dictated, but contended that they had written many things, without any such assistance ; that, like other pious authors, they at times only wrote their own opinions ; so that Mr. Denis only believed so much of the Bible as he approved of. The divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, &c. he did not believe. From Jane Leed, Madam Bourignon, Madam Guion, he had filled his head with *associating and centering with the divinity, which was the way to be all light, all eye, all spirit, all joy, all rest, all gladness, all love ; pure love, rest in quietness, absorbed in silent spiritual pleasure, and inexpressible sweetness, &c.* Mr. D. did not attend any place of worship, except the Horse-and-Groom public-house near Moorfields could be called such. In Moorfields he sometimes would hear part of a sermon or two, and for an hour or two after the orations were ended, he was to be seen disputing among the mechanics, who very often came there for that purpose. In the afternoon on Sunday, he would go to the above public-house, where a room full of persons of this description usually met, and one or other of them would first read a chapter in the Bible, and afterward animadvert on what he had read, and as many as were disposed to it, added their curious remarks. To this odd groupe of expositors, I was once introduced, but I did not repeat my visit.

From the disputes in my shop, example, &c. I soon came to think that the Sabbath-day was no more sacred than any other day ; so that instead of attending at places of worship, I sometimes read the whole of the day ; at other times I walked in the fields with Mr. D. his son, and other disputants, where we debated various subjects.

I believe when any one willingly neglects public worship, he will not long be attentive to private devotion; it was at least the case with me. I also soon began to entertain doubts concerning the doctrines of the Trinity, Atonement, &c. And in proportion as I relaxed in Christian duties, I grew more fond of such disputes as had a tendency to make my mind easy on that score.

About this time Mr. R. T—n—y advised me to read the Memoirs of John Bunce, which I soon procured and read through. This pernicious work, (for such I now think it to be), at once, not only eradicated the remains of Methodism, but also nearly the whole of Christianity.

Faults in the life, breed errors in the brain,  
And these, reciprocally, those again;  
The mind and conduct, mutually imprint,  
And stamp their image on each other's mint.

COWPER.

After the heterogeneous example of John Bunce, I indulged myself in the practice of many things which were inconsistent with the character of a Christian, and yet, like him, I was not willing to suppose those practices were at variance with the most exalted notions of rational Christianity.

Having, like John Bunce, given up the doctrines of the Trinity, Original Sin, Atonement made by Christ, the Obligation of the Sabbath, &c. and having become negligent of Christian duties, and a little relaxed in morals, it was not likely that I should stop here.

I think it was in this year (1776) that I became acquainted with one whom I shall call Jack Jolly, and some of his acquaintance, all downright infidels; but otherwise shrewd, sensible men. Of these I learned the names of such authors as had wrote on the side of infidelity; and also the titles of their pernicious productions.

I think it was the witty sarcasms and vile misrepresentations

presentations of Voltaire that first made me entirely give up my Bible, from which I had in past years derived so much real comfort in the most distressing circumstances of great poverty, and very great affliction. That precious book enabled me to breakfast, dine and sup on watergruel only, not barely with a contented mind, but also with a cheerful countenance and a merry heart. It was the Bible which supported me under the several years affliction of a beloved wife, in which I truly suffered with her; it was that book which enabled her, although young, to die with joy, and in full and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. When this charming young woman died, I also was given over, my soul was, as it were, hovering on my lips, just ready to depart. In this awful crisis, my amiable wife gone! All around me expecting the moment when time to me should be no longer!

——“The dim lamp of life just feebly left  
 “Then sink back again.

In this awful situation I remained a long time, how long I know not, perhaps a week or weeks; yet even in this state, although more dead than alive, did the divine promises contained in the sacred pages support and comfort me, so that at times I was filled with inexpressible pleasure. In those moments I could believe that I was

“A glorious partner with the Deity,  
 “In that high attribute, Eternal Life.—  
 “I gaz’d, and as I gaz’d, my mounting soul  
 “Caught fire, Eternity at thee;  
 “And dropp’d the world.”——

Say, ye infidels! in your thoughtful moments, why would you deprive your poor fellow mortals of that which alone can support them amidst the complicated miseries to which we are exposed?

If 'twas a *dream*, why *wake* me my worst foe ?  
 O for delusion ! O for error still !  
 Could vengeance strike much stronger.-----  
 Not over rich before, now beggar'd quite ;  
 More curst than at the *fall* ? The sun goes out !  
 The thorns shoot up ! What thorns in every thought !  
 Why sense of better ? It imbitters worse.  
 Why sense ? Why life ? If but to sigh, then sink  
 To what I *was* ? *Twice* nothing ! and much woe !  
 Woe from heav'n's bounties ! woe from what was wont  
 To flatter most, high *Intellectual powers* !  
*Thought, virtue, knowledge* ! Blessing by their scheme,  
 All poison'd into pains. First knowledge, once  
 My soul's ambition, now her greatest dread.  
 To know thyself, true wisdom ? No, to shun  
 That shocking science. Parent of despair !  
 Avert the mirror, if I see I die.

\* \* \* \* \*

All's inverted, *Wisdom* is a fool.  
 Sense take the reign ; blind *PASSION* ! drive us on ;  
 And Ignorance befriend us on our way ;  
 Yes ; give *pulse* full empire ; live the *brute*,  
 Since as the brute, we die. The *sum* of man,  
 Of godlike man ! to *revel* and to *rot*.

Notwithstanding I had, as I have observed before, been sometime relaxing in religious principles and duties, yet no tongue, or pen, can describe what I felt at times, on relinquishing the volume which contained the words of eternal life : but it was wrenched from me. For I was so destitute of knowledge and abilities, as not to be able to answer the witty and artful objections of that arch infidel Voltaire, and others whose works soon after I read. I must confess that I felt it very hard to part from this old constant companion of mine ; and should have been glad to have retained its divine consolations, without being bound to obey all its precepts. But as that could not be, after many struggles, I took my leave of that inestimable treasure of wisdom and knowledge.

“ Did



" Did I not know the Master whom I serv'd,  
 " Who call'd me to him, and pour'd into my heart  
 " His heav'nly doctrines, rais'd my lowly thoughts,  
 " And taught me the energy of faith.

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

## LETTER II.

———— With imagin'd sovereignty,  
 Lord of a new hypothesis he reigns,  
 He reigns how long? "Till a usurper rise;  
 ——— Shews his friend's mistake, and thence confirms his own.  
PRIOR.

As for the dog, the furies, and the snakes,  
 The gloomy caverns, and the burning lakes,  
 And all the vain infernal trumpery,  
 They neither are, nor were, nor e'er shall be.  
DRYDEN.

———— Proud rationals,  
 (That deep in speculation's wandering maze,  
 Bemuse themselves with error, and confound  
 'The laws of men, of nature, and of heav'n,)  
 Presumptuous in their wisdom, dare dethrone  
 Even from his works the Maker; and contend  
 'That he who form'd it, governs not the world.  
*Dr. Dodd's Thoughts in Prison.*

DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING quite done with the word  
 of God, I soon entirely neglected the public worship  
 of God. Before this I went at times to one, or  
 other, of Mr. Wesley's chapels, or to some parish  
 church. But now I was taught to believe, that as  
 the whole world was God's Temple, I could pay my  
 devotions to him at any time and in any place; the  
 consequence you may easily imagine; the divine  
 Being was soon too much out of my thoughts; the  
B 4
Sabbath-



Sabbath-day was spent in reading pernicious books, or in writing my catalogues, arranging my books, casting up my profits, visiting, &c. And it was not long before I could make a hand at cards on that day.

As soon as I had gone through Voltaire's pieces, I procured other works of the same tendency, and in reading them I employed most of my spare hours for several years. And although I did not devote so much time to them after this, but read also history, voyages, travels, poetry, novels, &c. yet I often had recourse to them, and took every opportunity of purchasing new publications which had the same pernicious tendency; and also every old one that I was not before possessed of; so that at last I had got nearly the whole of this species of writing which had been published in the English language. I not only procured them, but read them, and some of them several times over, with a pencil in my hand to put marks to the most particular passages.

I also procured a Bible interleaved with blank paper, and transcribed many of the remarks and objections of infidel writers to various texts; and opposite to some texts I even wrote my own objections. Having had such a long acquaintance with the authors in favour of freethinking, I am able to remark that Thomas Paine, and other modern infidels, instead of consulting the Bible, have copied the objections to it, from those authors that preceded them, which objections have been ably answered, over and over again, by men of deep learning and great ability; those answers I, like other freethinkers, neglected to read, until a few years since. Now I have read them, I am ashamed of having been so easily duped and cheated out of my Christianity.

Vast bodies of philosophy  
I oft have seen, and read,  
But all are *bodies dead*,  
Or bodies by art fashioned.

I never

I never yet the *living soul* could see,  
But in thy *Book* and *thee*.

COWLEY.

I will now relate the progress of one of my acquaintance, from serious godliness to infidelity. I will call him Dick Thrifty; and I assure you, it is nearly the case with many in the infidel corps. I must first inform you, that most of the freethinkers that I have known in the lower and middle ranks of society, were once influenced by religion, at least in appearance.

Dick Thrifty was near thirty years since, like your old friend, a truly pious man; at least, I am fully persuaded he was perfectly sincere in his religious profession: he being of an open, honest-hearted disposition, incapable of practising any deceit. About the years 1774 and 1775, he read a good deal of polemical divinity, and by this means lost that simplicity and gentleness of disposition so essential to the Christian character. He then got acquainted with some, who having given up one point of Christian doctrine after another, had, in the end, become downright infidels. These acquaintance advised him to read the works of Chubb, Tyndal, Morgan, Collins, Shaftesbury, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume, &c. Before Dick had read a quarter part of those books, he, like me and others, quitted his religious connexions. For a short time Dick boasted of being a rational Christian, and talked much of Chubb as being a very sensible, clear writer. After Dick had read Tyndal, Collins, Morgan, and Shaftesbury, he was then a Christian deist. Before Dick had gone through Voltaire's deistical pieces, he gave up Christ entirely, and was a philosophical deist; and pitied the poor ignorant Christians for suffering themselves to be kept in the dark. But Dick had not quite finished Bolingbroke's philosophical works before he was, from a dignified philosopher, sunk down to a reasoning brute. He had lost his immortal, immaterial part in the laby-

riths of metaphysics. Voltaire's Ignorant Philosopher made Dick a Sceptic; Helvetius and Hume gave the finishing stroke to the picture; poor Dick was then an atheist!

Duped by fancy, erring reason stray'd  
Thro' night's black gloom; and with uncertain step,  
Stumbled from rock to rock.-----

OGILVIE'S PROVIDENCE.

Although Dick did not long remain a downright atheist, yet he long continued in a state of distracting doubt and uncertainty; at one time a deist, then doubting of every thing, even of his own existence. Now, there must be two eternal substances, matter and spirit, and then there can be but one, which must be matter. Sometimes he is quite sure that there is one self-existent being, and that he has an immaterial soul to adore him; then again he is perplexed and distracted with doubts.

"Your crabbed rogues that read Lucretius,  
"Are against gods you know, and teach us  
"That atoms dancing round the centre,  
"At last made all things at a venture."

Whenever I read the following lines they affect me much, being applicable to myself, and many others, as well as to Dick.

Poor wretch! he read, and read, and read,  
Till his brain turned-----  
He had unlawful thoughts of many things;  
He never lov'd to pray  
With holy men, nor in a holy place---  
----- It is a perilous tale!      WORDSWORTH.

The following lines are part of an epitaph by the same author.

----- A moralist almost perchance appears,  
Led heaven knows how! to this poor sod;  
And he has neither eyes nor ears;  
Himself his world, and his own god:  
One to whose smooth-rubb'd soul can cling  
Nor form nor feeling great nor small,  
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,  
An intellectual All in All!

I am, dear friend, your's.

LETTER

## LETTER III.

They work this transformation on the soul  
 Dismount her like as the serpent at the fall,  
 Dismount from her native wing (which soar'd  
 Ere while ethereal heights), and throw her down,  
 To lick the dust, and crawl.— DR. YOUNG.

But when no female arts his mind could move,  
 She turn'd to furious haste her impious love.  
 DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.

—————Hallow'd is the nuptial bed,  
 Of deeper sanctity than oaths, and guarded  
 By justice. POTTER ÆSCHYLES.

DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING informed you in the last  
 of the extraordinary revolutions that took place in  
 Dick's sentiments, you will not be much surprised  
 when I inform you that a great alteration also took  
 place in his life and conduct. Lucretius says, that

—————If it once appear,  
 That after death there's neither hope nor fear ;  
 Then men may freely triumph, then disdain  
 The Poet's tales, and scorn their fancy'd pain ;  
 But now we must submit, since pains we fear  
 Eternal after death, we know not where. CREECH.

I knew Dick before he made any profession of  
 religion, and thought him an honest well-meaning  
 man, a facetious, sprightly companion ; his temper  
 tolerably good upon the whole ; if affronted passion-  
 ate, but easily pacified, being incapable of bearing  
 any malice to any one. He was grateful for any  
 favours or kindness towards him ; open and unsus-  
 pecting, and friendly. I believe I may add that he  
 was capable of the highest degree of friendship.  
 His sociable turn of mind at times drew him into  
 convivial parties.

Before he turned Methodist and married, he was  
 B 6 addicted



addicted to the pleasures of lawless love; but he treated the sex in the kindest manner. After he turned Methodist he lived a strict religious life, and was, I think, as I before observed, perfectly sincere in what he professed. I now can recollect that he had some enthusiasm, and a spice of fanaticism. Such as were acquainted with him thought that he generally lived a contented and happy life. He bore some misfortunes which befel him with fortitude. In short there was great reason to believe that religion had made a radical change in his heart and life.

Reading much religious controversy, and disputing about doctrines, has hurted many. I think Butler says

They dispute so much and long about it  
That ev'n believers began to doubt it.

Some other Poet says,

In controverted points can reason sway,  
When passion or conceit still hurries us away?  
What in many bulky works are found,  
Does not enlighten reason, but confound.  
In paths uncertain and unsafe he treads,  
Who follows blindly other's fertile heads;  
Our understanding they with darkness fill,  
Cause strong corruption and pervert the will.  
Through an uncertain *medium* now we look,  
And find that *falsehood*, which for *truth* we took.

When Dick's mind was puzzled he was not so strict, nor so universally attentive to preserve the christian temper and manners as he had been; so that when he ventured on the writings of freethinkers he was the more easily seduced from the truth and simplicity of the gospel. For some time after Dick had become in his own conceit a philosopher, he talked of the eternal rule of right, the fitness of things, of loving virtue merely for its own sake, and a great deal to the same purpose. Indeed at times he would insinuate that the Christian had not



so much reason to dread the commission of sin as a freethinker had, that infidels of all men ought to be careful how they lived, as they did not believe that there was any intercessor for transgressors; but it was remarked that he grew more relaxed in some moral duties. It is true that to all appearance he remained an honest generous tradesman, and was charitable to real objects of distress: but he would sometimes spend the major part of the night with freethinking companions at a tavern. Two or three years after he commenced moral philosopher, he was not able to resist the charms of his servant maid, although he was possessed of an amiable wife, with whom, to all appearance, he lived very happy, and who both loved and esteemed her husband.

----- "Lust tho' to a radiant angel link'd,  
Will satiate itself in a celestial bed,  
And prey on the garbage."-----

Some years after, during a long illness of his wife, he went so far as to keep a girl; but Dick used to excuse himself by solemnly asserting that he never had seduced an innocent girl, or been great with any other man's wife. In saying this, I believe he did not violate the truth, as he always appeared to detest the villain who could corrupt innocence, or destroy the domestic happiness of another man.

In one instance I knew that Dick acted with great honour; a freethinking lady, who had been made such by her husband, happened (perhaps designedly) to stay rather late at a friend's house where Dick was. He offered to see her home. In the way home she took occasion to remark to her 'Squire, that her husband being many miles away, she should be obliged to sleep alone; that she must go to bed in the dark, as she had ordered her maid to go to bed, and not sit up for her; she had taken the key in her pocket, and would let herself in. She also gave other broad hints not to be mistaken.

Dick

Dick knew his own failing, and said to himself, "how can I do this great wickedness and sin against my friend." As soon as he came to the door (for he durst not trust himself in the house), he suddenly bid her good night, and set off towards home as fast as he could. The lady was perhaps the more disappointed, as she might know that Dick was not strictly true to his wife: but be that as it will, she acted over again the part of Potiphar's wife, and Antaea; she accused Dick to her husband, of having made an attempt on her chastity.

For him Antaea burn'd with lawless flame;  
And strove to tempt him from the paths of fame;  
In vain she tempted, the relentless youth  
Endued with wisdom, sacred fear, and truth.  
Fir'd with his scorn, the Queen to Præctus fled,  
And begg'd revenge for her insulted bed.

ILIAD.

Some one, I forget who, says, that

——— "Virtue never will be moved,  
"Tho' lewdness court it in the shape of heaven."

In novels we often read of men's planning deeply, and taking incredible pains in order to seduce wives: in real life even the most profligate part of our sex do not commonly attack a fort that appears to be impregnable, nor are they fond of going on a forlorn hope. Such married women who at all times behave themselves as the delicacy of the female character requires, have seldom complaints of this nature to make. Cato would not have his wife suspected; no doubt but he had the same ideas just hinted at. The late pious Bishop Wilson says, in his 55th sermon, "Let but women so behave themselves, as that the men may think them *chaste*; "and they may be confident, nobody will attempt "them *but in an honest way*." He adds, "But "this is the *real* occasion of so many miscarriages:— "people discover, either by their very vain dress, or  
"looks,

“ looks, or words, or behaviour, they discover that  
 “ they *do not fear God*, that they only *want to be*  
 “ *tempted*; and this encourages those that are as  
 “ nought as themselves to tempt, and to gain their  
 “ wicked ends of them.”

Although Dick was not quite so abandoned by honour and conscience as to be capable of violating the ties of friendship, by making his friend's wife a prostitute, even when tempted so to do; yet I have reason to believe that some of his infidel companions would not have scrupled, for a moment's gratification, to have sacrificed the peace and happiness of their dearest friends.

---

“ At night  
 “ His best friend's couch the rank adulterer  
 “ Ascends secure; and laughs at gods and men.  
 “ Prepost'rous madmen, void of fear or shame,  
 “ Lay their crimes bare to the chaste eyes of heav'n;  
 “ Yet shrink, and shudder at a mortal's sight.”

I have been more particular in describing my friend Dick's infidelity and vice, as in so doing I have, in some particulars, described my own case and that of others.

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

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## LETTER IV.

---

A troubled *ocean*, spread  
 With bold adventurers, their *all* on board;  
 No second hope, if here their fortune frowns:  
 Frown soon it *must*.

### NIGHT THOUGHTS.

---

Why Thought? To toil and cut,  
 Then make our Bed in Darkness, needs no thought.  
 What *superfluities* are reasoning Souls!  
 O give *Eternity*! or thought destroy.

Wretched

Wretched *preferment* to this round of pains !

Wretched capacity of frenzy, *Thought* !

Without thought our curse were half unfelt ;  
Its blunted edge would spare the throbbing heart.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

It seem'd as though his conscience would permit

A momentary pause, for one short gleam

Of hope to visit his benighted soul.

'Twas one step

Turn'd backward from the precipice of sin

And pointed towards repentance ; faint effort.

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

DEAR FRIEND,

I THINK you will be glad to peruse the following letters, as they will help to convince you of my being quite in earnest in renouncing infidel principles and practice. They were wrote to some of my old sceptical companions. The first you will perceive was wrote when I only began to see the effects of infidel principles on the morals of mankind, before I was convinced of the truths of revealed religion. It was sent to Jack Jolly, in March, 1799.

“ Dear Jack,

“ I am uncertain whether you are dead or alive, in this world or in a better ; in a worse you cannot be. Could I meet with Mercury when I have finished this, I would transcribe a copy of it and send it by him, directed to Jack Jolly, the philosopher, in the Elysian Fields—inquire among the votaries of Bacchus.

“ As far as it regards yourself only, I do not think it of much consequence whether you are still alternately oppressed, and overwhelmed with sickness and pain, or making merry with your jovial companions over a bottle : now moralizing and reasoning on moral and physical evil ; then finding fault with administration ; one while believing in a great



great first cause, and then asserting that the universe has existed from all eternity. In short, whether you are still going on in the old dull round of a little pleasure and much pain; or, whether you have quitted this insignificant motley scene, for the chance of losing the happiness and misery of existence, or of existing in a happier state of things. But while I live in hopes of the pleasure of hearing from you, (although but seldom,) and of again seeing you by my fireside; I must confess, that I am so selfish as to wish you may not have had the start of me. I have sent you two letters since I received one from you. If you really are in a state of mortality, and should read this, do assure me of it, and let me know how your excellent wife is, and your children. I am also concerned to know how the philosopher your brother is.

“Tell me also what you now think of French philosophy and philosophers. The world is now more enigmatical than ever. Plutarch says that superstition is worse than atheism, several other philosophers have repeated it after him, and you and I have believed it; but now I have my doubts about it. On the other hand, I know not how to believe that ignorance and error can promote virtue; I really am much perplexed. One thing seems certain, the breaking down of the old superstitious dykes has brought on us an universal deluge of vice and immorality, the effects of which we must own are alarming in the highest degree.

“I have observed, that for a year or two past, a shyness has taken place in me towards my free-thinking authors; I have seldom any thing to do with them. Those late great favourites and constant companions of mine are now neglected and covered with dust; for at times I can scarce help thinking them chargeable with some of the dreadful evils that now are inundating Europe.

“A few years since you and I thought it would be charming



charming to live in a state composed entirely of free-thinkers. I now shudder at the very idea. No doubt there are some speculative infidels who like you, your brother, and myself, would gladly act their part in society by endeavouring to promote the happiness of all their fellow-creatures, and even that of the animal world ; but we now find that the bulk of mankind are only to be restrained by their hopes and fears.

“ But as you are a democrat, it is likely that you and I have been reading different and opposite relations, opinions, &c. so that it would not be matter of surprise if we should have formed ideas very different from each other ; so I will say no more on that head.

“ Unhappy man ! who, thro’ successive years,  
“ From early youth to life’s last childhood errs.  
“ Reason’s a taper, which but faintly burns ;  
“ A languid flame, that glows and dies by turns ;  
“ We see’t a little while, and but a little way  
“ We travel by its light as men by day ;  
“ But quickly dying, it forsakes us soon,  
“ Like morning-stars, that never stay till noon.

“ I am now grown more indifferent than ever as to what others do, how they live, &c. or even as to what they think of me, or my way of life. I know that I am thought to be a strange sort of a fellow, as I neither hunt, shoot, drink, nor play at cards. I read until I am tired. I then walk or work in my garden, and in bad weather I cleave wood, &c. Once a week I dine with Mrs. L.’s father, who, although a lawyer, is a very honest, peaceable gentleman. He is also good to his poor neighbours, and goes to church once a week, except I happen to be there on Sunday when the service is in the afternoon, when I keep him awake by relating all the droll adventures that I can recollect. In my turn I patiently listen to his old stories, although I have  
heard

heard them twenty times before ; long may he live  
in his peaceable and quiet mansion.

I am,

Dear Jack,

Your old friend,

*Alveston, March 10th, 1799.*

J. L."

I have since learned that Jack Jolly's brother died about this time, and that Jack survived him only about a year, but his health was so impaired as to render him unable to write. What were his dying sentiments I have endeavoured to learn, but without success ; I fear they were not what I now could wish them to be, as I wrote to an old infidel relation of his to know what state his mind was in when dying, but I never received any answer. As you will have more particulars relating to Jack, I will now add no more, but that,

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

## LETTER V.\*

————— The thought of death is the machine,  
The grand machine ! that heaves us from the dust,  
And fears us into men : that thought ply'd home  
will soon reduce the ghastly *precipice*,  
And gently slope our passage to the grave ;  
How warmly to be wish'd.

————— Send forth  
A thought of observation on the foe :  
To sally and survey the rapid march  
Of his ten thousand messengers to man ;

Who

\* This letter was wrote when I only admitted the truth of natural religion.---The letter alluded to in this is omitted.

Who Jehu-like behind him turns them all.  
 All accidents apart, by nature sign'd,  
 My warrant is gone out tho' dormant yet;  
 Perhaps behind one moment lurks my fate.  
 All casts of conduct, all degrees of health;  
 All dies of fortune, and all dates of age,  
 Together shook in Death's imperial urn,  
 Come forth at random.

DR. YOUNG.

" For heaven virtue can alone prepare;  
 " Vice would find herself unhappy there."

OLD FRIEND,

I Remember to have read twenty years since, I believe in a translation of one of the Classics, of a man that was suspected of having murdered his father; but as no positive evidence was advanced against him, it was thought unjust to punish him. In order to be more satisfied in the affair, a person unknown to him, was ordered to pay close attention to him every time he went to sleep, which was accordingly done; and on this person's reporting that the suspected man slept perfectly sound, it was concluded that he could not have murdered his father.

The poet, addressing himself to sleep, says,

Fair virtue's friend! Thou ne'er shalt shed  
 Thy blessing o'er the impious head,  
 Or midst the noise of crowds be found;  
 Thy balm-distilling sweets alone  
 To ermin'd innocence are known,  
 And gay content, with rural garlands crown'd.  
 By thee the shadow-trembling murderer's guilt  
 With double terror wrings the tortur'd soul;  
 The purpled steel, the life-destructive bowl,  
 Recal the baleful horrors of the blood he spilt.

MR. H---'S ODE TO SLEEP.

Bloomfield, in his "Farmer's Boy," has the following easy lines:

Delicious sleep! who could forbear,  
 With no more guilt than Giles, and no more care?

Peace

Peace on his slumbers waves her golden wing,  
Nor conscience once disturbs him with a sting.

I was led to the recollection of the above story by some part of my last letter to you, reflecting on the surprise it possibly might give you on reading of it. I was by a train of reasoning brought to conclude (as I have no faith in a death-bed repentance) that if a person cannot sleep soundly who has been guilty of any horrid crime, he certainly cannot die in peace, but will be tormented by his guilty conscience: so that if at that awful period he is in good humour and can laugh, like Anne Bolen and others mentioned in my last, I, with the apostle, "*trust that he hath a good conscience.*"

But my dear friend, if because I could wish to die in a perfect good humour, like the Emperor Augustus, you think me a mere trifler, and an enemy to serious thoughts, you never were more mistaken, as no man can think more gravely on serious subjects than I do at times, and that frequently; but then I insist on it, that, a time of sickness, when the body is overwhelmed with pain and disorders, is not a suitable time for repentance; much less should that important work be deferred to a death-bed. Nothing surprises me more than to hear or read of rational beings, or some who would be thought such, talk of making their peace with Heaven on their death-bed.

The greatest offenders against the laws of society, in general shew great contrition when brought to the gallows; yet no one is so ignorant as to believe that their repentance is of that kind as, were their lives spared, would prevent them from committing other daring offences. How then can we imagine that the heart of a villain who has the good luck to escape the gallows, can be totally changed on his death-bed.

I wish from my soul that our dramatic and novel writers had not given so many deep wounds to morality as, from observation, I have great reason to think



think they have done by their frequent insinuations of the efficacy of a few days', sometimes a few hours' repentance or remorse. Surely, in all such productions, every villain and immoral character should be "sent to his account with all his imperfections on his head:" for it is scarcely possible for the Devil himself to insinuate any ideas more destructive to moral rectitude than the sufficiency of remorse of conscience on a death-bed.

Homer relates the death of Elpenor in a very concise manner; and to Christians it must appear awful:

Full headlong from the roof the sleeper fell,  
And snapp'd his spinal joint and wak'd in hell.

POPE'S ODYSSEY.

I have often been puzzled to find out where those authors of plays and novels (some of whom are very respectable, and deserve the esteem of the community,) learned their notions of repentance. They did not learn them from the scriptures, for in them repentance is made to consist of an entire change of heart and life. Natural religion teaches the same doctrine. By the works of the learned we find that the viedam of the Persians, the sacred books of the ancient Bramins, the morals of Confusius, all hold forth the same notions in respect to repentance. The heathen philosophers taught the same doctrine; Plato says, that such men as have *only* committed *venal sins* must repent all their lives afterwards; and even though they spend the remainder of their lives in repentance, yet that they must of necessity be cast into Tartarus for a time. This great philosopher, in his Commonwealth, and also in his treatise of the Immortality of the Soul, supposes that souls, both good and bad, carry their good or evil dispositions with them into the other world; or in other words, that every man carries the seeds of eternal happiness or misery in his own mind: so that if we go into the other world with evil passions unmortified,



mortified, they will not only be far more violent than now, but our perception of them will be pure and unalloyed by any intermixture of enjoyment.

Dr. Scott, in the three first chapters of his *Christian Life*, has pursued the Platonic doctrine through all its consequences. It is well worth the attention even of a philosopher. Mr. Boyd has given us an excellent summary view of the Platonic doctrine with respect to a future state, at the end of his translation of Dante's *Inferno*: I will give you a few short extracts.

"The souls of men, whenever they leave the body, doubtless associate with spirits like themselves."

"We cannot see how spirits act upon each other, yet there is no doubt but the plagues inflicted by spirits upon spirits are as immediate as those inflicted by body upon body."

"What woeful society must that be! where all trust and confidence is banished, and every one stands upon his guard, tortured with eternal vigilance of surrounding mischiefs! when all his employment is diabolical fraud.—There society is like the monster Scylla, whom the poets speak of, whose inferior parts were a company of dogs continually snarling and quarrelling among themselves, and yet inseparable from each other, as being parts of the same substance."

"As the punishment arises in a great degree from the acquired habit, it must last as long as the existence of the criminal."

"In every act of virtue there is an imperfect union of the soul with God, and some degree of the pleasure of heaven. When habit has made the exercise of virtue delightful, we shall find ourselves under the central force of heaven, sweetly drawn along by the powerful magnetism of its joy and pleasure."

From every point of view, I think it is evident that repentance does not consist in a momentary sorrow, but in a change of disposition and life.

I must confess that I cannot help thinking, that heaven would be a strange sort of a place if every rascal, knave, and fool were permitted to go there who have, on their death-bed, experienced remorse of conscience. Such wretches as these have made a hell of this world to all connected with them; and are they to make a hell of heaven also? Can one conceive a worse hell than it would be for a perfectly honest man to live eternally with a rogue, or a virtuous woman with an old bawd; a Howard with a Roberspierre; a Lucretia with Mother Johnson; Jonas Hanway with Paul Jones; Penelope with a modern wife; Aspasia and Octavia with Cleopatra and Xantippe; Guyon and Bourignon with Ninon de L'enclos and Lady M. W. M——e; Socrates and Plato with Petronius and Charteres; Wesley and Whitfield with Woolston and Tom Paine; Mrs. H. More and Mrs. Rowe with Mrs. Behn and G. A. Bellamy; the Man of Ross with Elwes; Bigot Mary with Lady Jane Gray; Sophronia with Sapho; Nero and Bonaparte with Alfred and George III.

We laugh when we read of the Indians in the East, firmly believing that, if they can but die with a cow's tail in their hand they are quite sure of going to heaven; but are not our notions to the full as absurd as theirs? Is our death-bed repentance any thing more than a cow's tail in our hand?

Walpole, in the following lines, ridicules a Roman Catholic death-bed repentance, which is not more ridiculous than our own.

Some hoary hypocrite, grown old in sin,  
Whose thoughts of heav'n with his last hour begin,  
Counting a chaplet with a bigot care,  
And mumbling somewhat 'twixt a charm and pray'r,  
Hugs a dawb'd image of his injur'd Lord,  
And squeezes out on the dull idle board  
Sore-ey'd gum of tears; the flannel crew  
With cunning joy the fond repentance view,  
Pronounce him bless'd, his miracles proclaim,  
Teach the slight crowd to adore his name,  
Exalt his praise above the saints of old,  
And coin his sinking conscience into gold.

Another

Another celebrated wit also ridicules the same subject :

—————With the rattle in the throat,  
 Their dying moments they devote  
 To penitence, as late as faint,  
 Whilst each invokes his favourite saint ;  
 Saint Rook, Saint Mitouche, and Saint Martin,  
 His feeble efforts to take part in :  
 In vain they sing and Latin brawl ;  
 In vain, alas ! to sprinkling fall :  
 Their psalmody, their Latin fails,  
 And holy water nought avails.  
 At the bed's foot, upon the watch,  
 The devil squats, the soul to catch,  
 With outstretch'd claws, as from the clay  
 Escap'd, the captive wings its way ;  
 And bears it to the depth of hell,  
 Where, fit abode, such spirits dwell.

VOLTAIRE.

The authors of the *Monthly Review*, for May 1798, in reviewing Matilda Betham's *Poems*, very justly remark, that the moral tendency of the following lines may be questioned :

Yet if remorse could expiate his guilt ;  
 If the worst sufferings could the crime erase ;  
 If tears could wash away the blood he spilt,  
 'Then Anselm's penitence obtain'd him grace.

"It must be allowed," say they, "that it is the height of presumption to set bounds to the mercies of God ; but may it not give encouragement to vice, to flatter ourselves with the expectation of pardon for the greatest crimes, on the easy terms of what we call repentance ; which, after all, may be fallacious, or at best imperfect ?

We probably should have omitted this reflection, which may be deemed too serious for the occasion, did we not think that our writers of fictitious history, whether in prose or in verse, are often too indulgent to vice, and apt to ascribe too great an efficacy to repentance."

c

I have

I have no doubt at all but the foregoing lines have an immoral tendency; yet a very long list of much worse passages might be made out from plays, poems, and novels; and although those writers may not intend it, yet they must be reckoned amongst the encouragers of vice. In a very pleasing poem there is a catastrophe of a wretched youth, which, although not the worst of the kind, has, I think, an immoral tendency; and the more so as it was wrote by a clergyman. I will give you a part of his character, as supposed to be drawn by his father.

Virtue forsook him, and habitual vice  
Grew in her stead. He laugh'd at honesty;  
Became a sceptic; and could rise a doubt  
Even of his father's truth. 'Twas idly done  
To tell him of another world, for wits  
Know better; and the only good on earth  
Was pleasure; not to follow that was sin.  
"Sure he that made us, made us to enjoy;  
"And why, said he, should my fond father prate  
"Of virtue and religion."

\* \* \* \* \*

Then to town  
Hies the gay spark, for futile purposes,  
And deeds my bashful muse disdains to name;  
From town to college, till a fresh supply  
Sends him again from college up to town.

\* \* \* \* \*

He prates of deeds unworthy of a brute;  
Vile deeds; but such as in these polish'd days  
None blames or hides.

So Toby fares, nor heeds,  
'Till terms are wasted, and the proud degree,  
Soon purchas'd, comes his learned toils to crown.  
He swears, and swears he knows not what, nor cares.  
Becomes a perjur'd graduate, and thinks soon  
To be a candidate for orders. Ah!  
Vain was the hope. Tho' many a wolf as fell  
Deceive the Shepherd and devour the flock,  
Thou none shalt injure. On a luckless day,  
Withdrawn to taste the pleasures of the town,  
Heated with wine, a vehement dispute  
With a detested rival shook the roof.  
He pen'd a challenge, sent it, fought, and fell;

And,



And, if there be for such delinquents room  
In God's eternal mansions, went to heaven.

REV. J. HORDE'S B. O.

One horrid crime I have omitted. The unfeeling brute had by his extravagance reduced his kind father and sister to beggary. His fatal end, although supposed to be related by his father, yet, as this father is a religious man, is, I think highly blameable.

But I am afraid that if you thought part of my last letter too gay, you will think the whole of this too grave; so I will only add a few serious lines from Young.

A soul without reflection, like a pile  
Without inhabitant, to ruin runs.

\* \* \* \* \*

Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore  
Of that vast ocean we must sail so soon:  
And put good works on board, and wait the wind  
That shortly blows us into unknown worlds.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

I am,  
Dear Friend,  
Your's.

## LETTER VI.

—————Oh ye thoughtless,  
Intoxicate with draughts that, opium like,  
For transient moments stupify the mind  
To wake in horror and confusion wild!

DODD.

Is it in words to paint you? O ye fallen!  
Fallen from the wings of *reason* and of *hope*!  
Erect in stature, prone in appetite!  
Patrons of pleasure, posting into pain!  
Lovers of argument, averse to sense!  
Boasters of liberty, fast bound in chains!  
Lords of the wide Creation, and the shame!  
More senseless than the *irrationals* you scorn!

Deepest in woe from means of boundless *bliss*!  
 Your souls have quite worn out the mark of heav'n,  
 By vice new cast, and creatures of your own:  
 But though you can *deform*, you can't destroy;  
 To *curse*, not *uncreate* is all your pow'r.  
 ---Fall he *must* who learns from death alone  
 The dreadful secret,---That he *lives* for ever.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

DEAR FRIEND,

FOR a year or more after I wrote the last of the two preceding letters, I continued in a state of perplexity which increased upon me. At last I procured some books in defence of divine revelation, and soon after some authors on practical divinity; but it was with difficulty that I prevailed on myself to avow the alteration that had by that time taken place in my sentiments. I however, at last, wrote the following letter to J. B.

“ Old Acquaintance,

I have no right, nor any inclination to upbraid you; your past conduct, on reflection, must make you so truly miserable as to render you an object of commiseration. You know by the trifle which I sent you by Mr. D. that I was in T—n last June, and heard without much surprise that you were come from London, and was then in the poor-house. On this occasion very gloomy ideas took possession of my mind; so painful were my feelings that I could not call upon you. I believe few people feel more than I do on seeing an old companion reduced by his own misconduct to a state of wretched poverty; yet, painful as those reflections were, I had still more distressing thoughts of your very sad case. I, in imagination, saw you stretched on a wretched bed, groaning under the aches and pains of disease, a ruined constitution, and premature old age; and, what is still a thousand times worse, I pictured your features distorted, and your countenance

nance made ghastly by the excruciating tortures you suffered in your mind! Our spirit, or fortitude, may support us in bearing the infirmities of the body, as sickness and pain; *but a wounded spirit who can bear?* I have not finished my melancholy picture. What I have to add is still more dreadful. This poor man, (said I,) so racked and tortured, is perhaps without God in the world! Horror of horrors! Of all the most terrifying ideas this is now to me the most frightful! To be without God in the world!!! Oh, ye French atheists, take away our liberty; take all that we have; put us in a dungeon, or on the rack; but do not by your sophistical arguments endeavour to rob us, poor wretched mortals, of our God!

A soul in converse with her God, is heav'n;  
 Feels not the tumults and the shocks of life;  
 The whirls of passion, and the strokes of heart.  
 A deity believ'd is joy begun;  
 A deity ador'd is joy advanc'd;  
 A deity belov'd is joy matur'd.  
 Each branch of piety delight inspires;  
 Faith builds a bridge from this world to the next,  
 O'er death's dark gulph, and all its horrors hides;  
 Praise, the sweet exhalation of our joy,  
 That joy exalts and makes it sweeter still;  
 Pray'r ardent opens heaven, and lets down a stream  
 Of glory on the consecrated hour  
 Of man in Audience with the Deity.  
 Who worships the great God, that instant joins,  
 Joins the first in heav'n, and sets his foot on hell.

YOUNG.

The reason of my troubling you with my gloomy thoughts on your present situation and state of mind is this: I remember between twenty and thirty years since, you was made acquainted with my sceptical state of mind; and although I never approved of your rudely obtruding your opinions in company, or your endeavouring to turn others out of the good old way; yet, as perhaps by my example or remarks, or by lending you books, you may have

been more or less confirmed in antichristian opinions. I could not rest satisfied until I had informed you that my mind has undergone a very great change; that I have a thousand times heartily repented, that the pernicious writings of witty infidels should ever have made me even doubt of the truth of the heart-improving, soul-cheering doctrines of Christianity.

I must also inform you that I have seen the dreadful effects of infidelity on others. Some of my most intimate acquaintance, before they were infected with infidelity were examples of piety and virtue; but, having once turned their backs on the religion of Christ, they soon became slaves to the most degrading vices. Several that you saw at my house when you first came to London did, by their sad way of life, bring on themselves shocking disorders under which they suffered many years before they were summoned to give up their accounts. There, profane wit and ribaldry are no more.

Although I have an aversion to fanaticism and enthusiasm, yet I would much rather again listen to the poor ignorant enthusiastic David Burford, whom you must well remember, than to the most shrewd and witty remarks of my old freethinking acquaintance, who used to set the table in a roar. These clever, sensible, witty fellows, with all their subtile reasoning, had not understanding enough to live like rational beings, but by their vicious practices brought on themselves years of pain and misery, and shortened their existence. The good old David Burford's fear of God made him live soberly and righteously; his faith enabled him many years to bear poverty and affliction with cheerfulness, as believing that all would work together for his good—as he would often tell us. His hope of going to a better world enabled him to expect his approaching dissolution with joy.

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— deep is the stake,  
 And awful the inquiry—how the soul  
 May smile at death, and meet its God in peace. DODD.  
 O, old



O, old Acquaintance, this very poor and very ignorant old man, was in reality much wiser than we have been, although we used to laugh at and despise him. May we begin to live the life, that at last we may die the death of this poor simple weaver!

Among all your freethinking acquaintance did you ever know one whose reading, learning, or wit enabled him to live so uprightly and comfortably in so much poverty and affliction; or who could, like him, look death steadily in the face with humble joy. Young says truly,

“ A Christian is the highest style of man.”

The most learned, the wisest, and best of men were Christians. In reading history and biography we learn, that many of the most intelligent men, after many years spent in voluminous libraries in eager search of science, of knowledge, and wisdom, have, in the end, thrown aside even the most respectable works of ancient and modern philosophers, moralists, historians, politicians, poets, &c. and have in their partly-neglected Bible found a treasure which every where else they had sought for in vain. The brightest geniusses have found ample satisfaction in that book. There is the sublime and the beautiful; the most pathetic stories, and elegant parables; the grandest descriptions and the most august ideas of the Deity; the most perfect morality; the greatest motives to virtue, and the most awful denunciations against vice. In a word, in that book we are taught the way of holy living; and by so living we ensure to ourselves an eternal state of felicity in the realms of everlasting light and love.

I am,

Old Acquaintance,

Your's, &c.

J. L.”

*Alveston, Jan. 1, 1803.*

To this letter I did not receive any answer until June the same year. It is time to conclude this.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER VII.

*Truth*, radiant goddess, sallies on my soul,  
And puts *delusion's* dusky train to Flight;  
— Shews the *real estimate* of things;  
Sees things *invisible*, feels things remote.

When late there is less time to play the *fool*.  
Soon our whole *term* for wisdom is expir'd,  
(Thou know'st she calls no council in the grave;)   
And everlasting fool is writ in *fire*,  
Or *real wisdom* wafts us to the skies.

YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

BY J. B.'s letter to me in June, it appears that an alteration has also taken place in his sentiments. The following letter, which I sent to him about a month after, will sufficiently inform you of the contents of his to me.

“ Old Acquaintance,

I sincerely rejoice to learn from your letter to me that God has not finally *given you over to strong delusions still to believe a lie*, for *not obeying the gospel of Christ*. I am also happy to learn that you have a better conviction than that which only brings with it a *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*, which is *ready to be poured forth on the adversaries of Christ*. May God, who is so rich in mercy, *establish both you and me in the truth as it is in Christ*, and in every good word and work, that we may

may not be in the number of those *that draw back unto perdition*, but of those that believe to the saving of the soul.

The life of Christ may well fill you with admiration and devotion. I was, even when an infidel, struck dumb and confounded whenever, for a few moments, I seriously reflected on his wonderful character. We have not only been wicked, but also astonishingly stupid in professing to disbelieve miracles, when at the same time we were obliged to believe the greatest of miracles: That the son of a poor obscure carpenter, brought up in a very ignorant, scandalous village, could *speak as never man spake*, and live among the dregs of mankind like a God!

---

In his bless'd life,  
We see the path, and in his death the price,  
And in his great ascent, the proof supreme  
Of immortality.—

DR. YOUNG.

You say that you have but one book of your own, which is the New Testament. In possessing that you have the best book in the world; a book which angels could not have composed: a book which the primitive Christians esteemed more than their lives; rather than suffer one of the Gospels or Epistles to be destroyed, they submitted to the most cruel torments, and endured the most lingering, ignominious deaths.

But for this book we should have been in worse than Egyptian darkness: the intellectual world would have been without a sun; we should have blundered in the dark; have stumbled upon error after error, without one cheering and enlightening ray.

“ And found no end in wondering mazes lost.”

But in those sacred pages life and immortality is brought to light; a glorious prospect is opened to us  
c 5 beyond

beyond the grave, where clouds and darkness are no more.

I am glad you have friends who will lend you plenty of books. Yes, he must be stupid indeed, whom even a little knowledge in astronomy does not fill with devotion.

In ardent *contemplation's* rapid car,  
From *earth*, as from my barrier I set out.  
How swift I mount! diminish'd earth recedes;  
I pass the *moon*; and, from her farther side,  
Pierce heav'n's blue curtain; strike into *remote*;  
Where with his tube, the subtle sage  
His artificial, airy journey takes,  
And to *celestial* lengthens *human* sight.  
I pause at ev'ry *planet* on my road,  
And ask for HIM who gives these orbs to roll,  
Their foreheads fair to shine. . . . From SATURN'S RING,  
In which of *earths* an army might be lost,  
With the bold comet take my flight,  
And those *sov'reign* glories of the skies,  
Of independant, native lustre, proud;  
The souls of systems! and the lords of life,  
Thro' their wide Empires!—What behold I now?  
A wilderness of wonders burning round;  
Where *larger* suns inhabit *higher* spheres;  
Perhaps the villas of descending gods;  
Nor halt I here, my toil is but begun;  
'Tis but the threshold of the DEITY!  
The fulness of the DEITY breaks forth  
In inconceivables to men and gods.  
Did I not tell thee we would mount, LORENZO,  
And kindle devotion at the *stars*?

DR. YOUNG.

But even among the stars do not forget your New Testament; that, by the blessing of God, may make you wise unto salvation: and should that really be the case with you, perhaps you may be employed to all eternity in contemplating infinite wisdom and goodness among those stupendous works of the great *incomprehensible* CREATOR of those innumerable worlds.

Till lost in one immensity of space,  
A sense of Deity o'erwhelms your soul.

COURTIER.

If



If among the books of divinity that you are so kindly offered the use of, you can borrow any of the following, they will help to establish you in the belief of the truth of Divine Revelation:—Paley's Evidences of Christianity; Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, in Letters to Thomas Paine; Bishop Porteus' Compendium of the Evidences of Christianity; Addison's Evidences of the Christian Religion; Madam Genlis' Religion the only Basis of Happiness and true Philosophy, in which the Principles of the modern pretended Philosophers are laid open and refuted, 2 vols. Butler's Divine Analogy; Bentley against Collins; Bentley's Sermons on the Folly of Atheism; Jenkin's Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion, 2 vols. I have lately read the whole of these works with great satisfaction. If you are fond of real philosophy and astronomy, you will be highly pleased with Bentley's Sermons on the Folly of Atheism. Paley's is an extraordinary good work. Butler's Analogy is a very great work. Jenkin's is the most copious and the best work I ever read in defence of divine revelation. It treats in a clear manner of the necessity of a divine revelation, antiquity of the scriptures, God's dispensations under the Patriarchs, Moses, Judges, Kings, and Christ; the wisdom and goodness of God is excellently displayed in the manner of the promulgation and preservation of the scriptures; various difficulties are cleared and objections answered. The author has, through the whole, discovered great depth of thought, a thorough knowledge of the history of the four great monarchies mentioned in the Old Testament, and of other ancient nations; which he has brought forward in confirmation of the truth of divine revelation. In reading this excellent learned production I could not help remarking the wonderful difference that there is between this work and the poor superficial works of freethinkers. Had those freethinkers ever read this work, they never would have exposed their own ignorance as they have

done ; and had you and I, and others of our acquaintance, been acquainted with it, we never should have been so seduced, perverted and imposed upon by shallow pretenders to sense and learning. Were I still a bookseller, I would immediately work off a very large impression, sell them cheap, and disperse them through every part of the world. The work has gone through various editions. It has been greatly enlarged and improved since it was first published. Before I conclude I would seriously advise you not to read any controversies on points of doctrine or articles of faith ; what is absolutely necessary to be known is plainly revealed.

“ Not *deeply* to discern, or much to know,  
 “ Mankind were born to wonder and adore.”

The more you read the New Testament the more you will enter into and partake of the spirit of it ; and your love for it will increase in proportion. Read also as much practical divinity as you can ; we all stand in need of every aid to keep us in a true Christian disposition, and steady in the profession of Christianity. Dr. Young says,

*At thirty man suspects himself a fool ;  
 Knows it at forty and reforms his plan ;  
 At fifty chides his infamous delay,  
 Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve,  
 In all the magnanimity of thought  
 Resolves ; and re-resolves ; then dies the same.*

• NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Neither you nor I considered that we were very great fools until we were more than fifty. The last line has been verified in thousands. God grant that it may not prove true of us also.

I am,  
 Old Acquaintance,  
 Your's,

*Alveston, July 28, 1803.*

J. L.”  
 You

You see, dear Friend, the melancholy effects of infidelity even in this life ; to what poverty, shame, and disgrace have thousands of its votaries been reduced. The conversion of this poor creature should also encourage us to use what abilities we may possess, however small they may be, -in order to reclaim others. We should put proper books into their hands, and never be tired or discouraged. Small causes have often produced great effects. I have been just reading of an atheist who was converted by one word. The story is related by Madame de Genlis in her " Religion considered as the only Basis of Happiness and of true Philosophy," vol. i. pag. 76. I will transcribe the passage :

She says, " Others after having doubted all their lives, change in a moment their sentiments and dispositions. I knew a man of great sense and very high character, whose conversion was brought about by a single word. He was yet in the age of the passions; he had never possessed the least principle of religion; and he prided himself on being an atheist. One day, in the presence of an ecclesiastic, equally distinguished by his eminent virtues and talents, he affected to brave all decorum, which ought at that instant to have constrained him to have held his tongue at least ; and after having given a detail of his sentiments and opinions, he ironically added, that, according to every appearance he should never be converted. Ah, exclaimed the ecclesiastic, who, till then, had been silent, if you could but hope!—He said no more, he got up and went out. But these words made a deep impression upon the heart of the atheist: he had no difficulty to comprehend their energetic meaning ; he felt himself moved and affected ; a croud of new reflections presented themselves to his mind ; he longed to see and converse again with the man who had produced in him so strange a revolution. The next day he even went in search of him ; he opened to him his heart, asked his ad-

“ vice, hearkened to him with attention, with eagerness ; and from that moment renounced for ever the vain sophisms of false philosophers. Such is the power of grace, it can produce in a moment the most surprising metamorphoses, and its effects will ever confound the incredulous observer, who shall be acquainted with the human heart.”

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER VIII.

Ye lov'd associates of unclouded hours,  
Whom I remember still, where are ye now ?  
Ah, whither tost by life's unfriendly waves !  
Perhaps on earth we never more may meet.

COURTIER.

Are taken with an itch of being wise ;  
They too, forsooth, must needs philosophise.

EPICETUS, BY WALKER.

A scheme ! which life deprives of *comfort* ; death  
Of hope ; and which vice only recommends.

DR. YOUNG.

Sick of his bliss, and bent on new adventures,  
Evil he would needs try : nor try'd in vain.  
(Dreadful experiment ! destructive measure !  
Where the worst thing could happen is success.)  
Alas, too well he sped :—the good he scorn'd  
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill us'd ghost.

BLAIR.

DEAR FRIEND,

THE two preceding letters were addressed to Mr. D. and by him conveyed to J. B. in the poor-house in T—n. When I was an apprentice Mr. D. came to work in the same shop as a journeyman, and two or three years after the death of



of my master he married my mistress, to whom he made an excellent husband; he buried her two or three years since. While he was a journeyman, I advised him to go and hear the methodist preachers; he did so; and for more than thirty years has been an upright, friendly, religious man. If his religion has been at all tinctured with fanaticism or enthusiasm, it was but in a small degree.

As Mr. D. is a very old acquaintance of mine, and also of J. B. I requested him to read my first letter to J. B. as he was ill. The reading of it gave him much pleasure, as he found that I had again embraced that religion which I had so long disbelieved; and he wrote a letter to congratulate me on the occasion. I will give you my answer to Mr. D.'s letter.

“ Sir,

You perhaps may have remarked, that whenever I visit T—n I also always visit the fields by the side of the river, and other places where, in my youthful days, I spent many of my leisure hours; from whence you may infer, that in those old favourite walks I endeavour to recollect the old and pleasing sensations which I felt while I was conversing with my old companions in those charming rural retreats, some of whom are now no more.

“ On this side and on that we see our friends  
Drop off like leaves in autumn.”

Others of them have lost every pious and virtuous sentiment: so that I cannot visit those old delightful haunts without finding that my pleasing recollections are tinctured with melancholy.

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Gracious God!  
How wonderful a compound, mixture strange,  
Incongruous, inconsistent, is frail man. DR. NODD.

As every field where I used to converse with my old acquaintance affords me delight, I hope you will  
believe

believe me when I assure you that I find great pleasure in seeing, or even hearing from any one of them who have preserved a good conscience. I was the more pleased with your letter dated Jan. 17, 1803, as from it I learn (what I had long since forgot,) that it was at my request you first was prevailed upon to hear those men whose discourses first made a religious impression on your mind, and have influenced your conduct ever since. I am not a Methodist; yet, I must own that, as by their means you have been blessed with grace, courage, and resolution to withstand the temptation of the devil and a sinful world, and have, as an earnest of heaven, attained that peace of mind which worlds cannot purchase, and nothing but a relapse into sin can destroy; if through them you attained that well-grounded hope which hath kept you steady in all the storms of this tempestuous state of things, where, at times, you can extend your prospect to future scenes where all is calm and sunshine, I do not wonder that you should wish to live and die in their connection. I hope I shall ever love and honor such of your community as by their lives and examples shew that they are Christians indeed.

Have you not remarked that those who have remained the most steady, have in general been such as were most free from enthusiasm and fanaticism. I wish those who think that they now stand firm may take heed lest they fall. Shall I tell you that most of the freethinkers of my acquaintance were once professors of religion, who had contracted a habit for disputation. It has often happened that men have disputed so long about points of doctrine that they have forgot the practical part of religion. We read of some of old who held the truth in unrighteousness, who are considered as in the direct road to delusion, and likely soon to believe in lies. Indeed it appears to me, that it is of little consequence what a man believes, if he neglects his duty towards God and man.

I differ

I differ from Mr. Wesley in many particulars; yet, I think the following passage, which gave the Messrs. Hill and Co. so much offence, and was the first occasion of the controversy between them and Mr. Fletcher, ought to be printed in letters of gold, and hung up in all your preaching houses.

The passage is in the minutes of the Conference held in August, 1770. Mr. Wesley says, "*Does not talking of a justified or sanctified state tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and moment pleasing or displeasing to God according to our works, according to our inward tempers and outward behaviour.*"

But to return, as I had no intention to ramble at this rate. I meant to observe, that although living according to the mild precepts of the gospel is the only way of living happily in this world; yet, we are such poor purblind mortals as to wish to extinguish the sun and walk by a taper; we first grow tired of the necessary restraints which the religion of Christ enforces, and think his gracious precepts hard sayings: in this state of mind, having already lost part of the disposition and temper of Christianity, we grow more remiss in public worship and private devotion, in observing the sabbath, &c then conscience upbraids and makes us unhappy; and if in this state of mind we happen to read, or hear, any sceptical arguments against revealed religion, doubts and perplexity succeed, and the more a person doubts of the divine authority of the gospel precepts, the more careless will he live; but still conscience will disturb his quiet and perhaps make him quite miserable at times. In this unstable state he may continue for several months or years, till, at length, to get rid of his uneasy mind, he dips again into books of infidelity, where probably he finds God represented as not attending to the frailties and follies of mortals; or perhaps he finds virtue and vice represented as qualities capable

capable of arbitrary definitions, revealed religion as mere priestcraft, &c. &c. In such authors, specious arguments are adduced, often good reasoning from wrong propositions, and truth and falsehood are so artfully blended together, that in the end he is prevailed upon to give up his Christianity; and by degrees his conscience is quite laid asleep.

In my next I will give you a further account of my progress in infidelity.

I am,

Sir,

Your's, &c,

*Alveston, Feb. 8, 1803.*

J. L.<sup>n</sup>

I had some thoughts of abridging this letter to Mr. D. but on second thought I judged it best to give you the whole.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER IX.

In hellish banquets, and obscene delights,  
The curst assembly here consume the nights.

E. ROWE.

— Scarce the gods, and heavenly climes,  
Are safe from our audacious crimes.

DRYDEN.

If death were nothing, and naught after death;  
— Then might the debauchee  
Untrembling mouth the heavens: then might the drunkard  
Reel o'er his full bowl, and when 'tis drain'd,  
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh  
At the poor bugbear death:—then might the wretch  
That's weary of the world, and tir'd of life,  
At once steal out of being when he pleas'd,  
And whether by what way, by hemp or steel.

But



————— But if there's an hereafter ;  
And that there is conscience tells ev'ry man ;  
Then must it be an awful thing to die.

BLAIR.

Who thinks ere long the man shall wholly die,  
Is dead already ; naught but the brute survives.

DR. YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

I WILL now transcribe my second letter to Mr. D. I know not well how to make it shorter.

“ Sir,

Perhaps for some time the young freethinker does not commit any great sin, at least not what is called such ; it is likely he will for a while pride himself on his very decent conduct, and talk of being governed by the religion of nature, philosophical principles, &c. But having given up Christianity he soon grows tired of his religious acquaintance, as he does not like their endeavours and serious arguments to convince him of his error. Having got rid of his pious acquaintance he looks out for some of those, who, like himself, are become philosophers. With those he at first takes “ a philosophical walk,” or “ cup of tea.” As their acquaintance increases they dine at each other's house. When this young freethinker is thought to be pretty well confirmed in his aversion to Christianity, he is invited to dine or sup with a party of those philosophers at a tavern. The two or three first times he goes home early and in good order. In those convivial parties he hears many stories against parsons, and many witty jests upon religion, under the name of superstition ; so that, by degrees, he becomes more hardened, his love for those meetings increases and makes him unwilling to part with such jovial companions. “ Sure taking

a

a cheerful glass can be no sin; God, say they, delights to see his creatures happy: let us have another bottle;" which is perhaps accompanied with an obscene or blasphemous song. Another song and another bottle is 'called for until they are intoxicated. In this state they reel into the street at two or three in the morning, where they are sometimes picked up by prostitutes and enticed into brothels, from whence they carry home to their wives those loathsome diseases which often contaminate the blood of several generations, and for which their own children will perhaps execrate their memory.

In this manner many soon learn to spend most of their nights; their days are mostly consumed in sleep; their business is lost; their fortunes run out; and their constitution totally ruined. Some of them are carried off by sudden deaths; others linger out a few years in great misery, and then die in a horrid state of doubt and fearful apprehension. And not a few of those philosophers have, by their principles and conduct, brought themselves into such an unhappy state of mind as not to be able to endure existence, but have

- ‘ Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage,
- “ Rush’d into the presence of their Judge ;
- “ As if they challeng’d him to do his worst.”

Although those imaginary philosophers see their companions drop off one after another, they are so far from taking warning that they do all they can to harden one another, by urging every argument they can think of against the immortality of the soul, a future state, and even against the very being of a God !

I could fill volumes, were I to be particular, in describing the beginning and progress of infidelity among those whom I have known since I first commenced bookseller, as many of them came often to my

my shop, and about twenty-two years since I was often in such taverns and meetings as I have referred to above.

Before the French revolution, infidelity had made great havock in England; but there is great reason to fear that since it has increased an hundred fold: and God only knows where this destructive pestilence will end. It, however, is matter of great consolation to see that several of our Bishops, and other sensible, learned clergymen, and also some able dissenting ministers, have published excellent confutations of the works of infidels. The clergy have also taken other wise and pious measures to stop, as much as possible, the progress of infidelity; and every man that has any regard for religion or morality, should put a hand to the good work. Those who can afford to do it should purchase such tracts against infidel principles as are published at a low price, and disperse them as much as possible wherever they are likely to do good. That cheap editions of all such works as are favourable to Christianity are not to be met with is much to be regretted. Several of those works might be decently printed, and well afforded, for one quarter their present prices. It is owing to their extravagant dearneess that so few are sold. Had they been published at low prices, tens of thousands more would have been disposed of, by which much good might have been done, while the publishers' profits would, in the end, be greater, in consequence of the increased sale of the books. It would also be a great help to the cause of religion if the wealthy part of the community were to disperse cheap tracts on practical divinity, together with cheap bibles, testaments, and also common-prayer books. I have remarked, that many persons who would not be at the expence or trouble of purchasing books, will either read themselves, or make their children read to them, when books are put into their hands.

It is natural to add, that those who can do nothing else for the cause of God, should shew, by their

their good examples, the influence of religion upon their life and conversation: this has often produced great effects upon scoffers. On the other hand, when infidels see that such as call themselves Christians can neglect the public worship of God, break the sabbath, be covetous or prodigal, proud and overbearing, or 'mean and undermining, drunkards or gluttons, defrauders and cheats, backbiters and slanderers, swearers, liars, &c. they are ready to conclude that such persons do not believe in a day of judgment, when every one shall be dealt with according to the deeds done in the body.

The late pious Bishop Horne, in one of his sermons says, "Some men considered as Christians, engaged in the concerns of a better world, and a view of their conduct, is really sufficient to make a thinking unbeliever conclude, that nine parts in ten of them either believe no more than himself, or that a statute of lunacy should be forthwith taken out against them."

I know that freethinkers will divert and harden one another with accounts of the bad practices of such as pretend to believe in Christ: so that such as call themselves Christians, and at the same-time live in the open breach of God's laws, are strengthening the cause of infidelity. Those, (saith Christ,) who are not with me are against me.

I am,

Sir,

Your's,

*Alveston, Feb. 16, 1803.*

J. L."

I will defer the remainder of what I wrote to Mr. D. until my next.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's,

LETTER



## LETTER X.

Where falls the censure? It o'erwhelms myself;  
 O how self-flatter'd was my grov'ling soul;  
 How, like a worm, *was* I wrapt round, and round  
 In silken thought, which reptile fancy span!  
 Till darken'd *reason* lay quite clouded o'er.

DR. YOUNG.

Wildly-wavering, rolls the dubious mind  
 From thought to thought, uncertain where its search  
 Should end.

— — — — —  
 Convinced by truth, the enlightened mind no more  
 Suspends its full assent.—

OGILVIE'S PROVIDENCE.

Not all the luminaries, quench'd at once,  
 Were half so sad, as one benighted mind,  
 Which gropes for happiness, and meets despair.

DR. YOUNG.

— Who would virtue, for herself regard  
 Or wed, without the portion of reward?

DRYDEN'S JUVENAL.

DEAR FRIEND,

I WILL now give you my last  
 letter to Mr. D.

“ Sir,

Yes, Sir, by the great mercy of God I am, (as you say,) returned to the study of my Bible. You may well be affected with my wonderful escape from such a dreadful precipice, on the crumbling brink of which I long slept. For these last two or three years I have not even loved the sight of that part of my private library where the books stand which seduced me from the simplicity of the gospel. They have been to me *Will o' the Wisp*s; and I have followed them through bog and quagmire, briars and thorns,

thorns, until my poor benighted and bewildered mind was lost in such a labyrinth, that it was next to impossible for me ever to find my way out. As I suppose you will be glad to know how so great a deliverance was effected, I will give you a short account of it.

Notwithstanding the bad lives of some infidels of my acquaintance, as I continued to retain a regard to decency, honor and honesty, myself; and as a few freethinkers are studious, and, to appearance, moral characters, professing to believe in natural religion, while, on the other hand, I have remarked that some were guilty of gross enormities, who yet professed to believe the bible to be the word of God; I, for a long time, thought that infidels were as likely to be governed by virtuous principles as Christians were; the vicious lives of some pretenders to Christianity in some measure tended to confirm me in this erroneous conclusion. I was still more confirmed in this opinion by the plausible reasoning in some infidel writers, who, as you know, talk much about moral rectitude, the eternal rule of right, moral obligation, moral sense, &c. &c. Lord Shaftesbury goes very far on this head. He asserts that vice as much disorders the mind as disease does the body; which, no doubt, is true. He is also right in asserting, that virtue is moral beauty, and vice moral deformity. But his Lordship goes much farther; he, like an ancient sect of heretics, and many modern mystics, says a great deal about loving God and virtue purely for their own sakes, without any regard to future rewards and punishments; that to do good actions in hopes of being rewarded is mercenary; and that persons influenced by such motives are endeavouring to overreach the Deity, by purchasing eternal happiness with a short life of virtue. He insinuates that the old saints, who had respect to the recompence of reward, were cunning people, and only good from the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. How much is this like the Devil's objection:

objection? Job does not serve God for naught. In another place his Lordship asserts that there is no more rectitude, piety, or sanctity in a creature thus reformed, than there is meekness or gentleness in a tyger strongly chained, or innocence and sobriety in a monkey under the discipline of the whip.

If the rewards proposed to Christians had been like those promised by Mahomed to his followers, sensual and voluptuous; his Lordship would have had some reason to object to their being proposed as incentives to virtue; but the idea given us in the New Testament, of the happiness in a future state is noble and sublime. It is represented as “a state of consummate holiness, goodness, and purity, where we shall arrive to the true perfection of our natures; a state into which *nothing shall enter that defileth*; where the spirits of the just are *made perfect*, and even their bodies shall be refined to a wonderful degree; where they shall be associated to the glorious general assembly of holy and happy souls, and to the most excellent part of God's creation, with whom they shall cultivate an eternal friendship and harmony; and, which is chiefly to be considered, when they shall be admitted to the immediate presence of the Deity, and shall be transformed, as far as they are capable of it, into the divine likeness. Such is the happiness the gospel setteth before us, and which furnisheth a motive fitted to work upon the worthiest minds. And the being animated with the hopes of such a reward hath nothing mean or mercenary in it, but rather is an argument of a great and noble soul.”

As to the fear of punishment, his Lordship, although inconsistently with what he in other places asserts, (in vol. 2. pag. 273 of his *Characteristics*,) says, that although fear allowed to be ever so low or base; “yet, *religion being a discipline*, and progress of the soul towards perfection, the motive of the reward and punishment is primary and of

D

“the

“ the highest moment with us ; till being capable of  
 “ more sublime instructions we are let from this  
 “ servile state, to the glorious service of affection  
 “ and love.”

It may be also remarked, that after a wicked man has been roused by the terrors of the Lord, if he continue to obey the good motions of the Spirit, God then *gives him a clean heart, and renews a right spirit* within him. He then begins to love God, and fears to offend him, fears to be separated from him and his people for ever. The fear of hell is scarcely remembered by a real Christian : but having taken *God for his portion*, for his supreme happiness, he *loves God because God first loved him*, and his greatest fear is lest he should do any thing to displease him. He can heartily and truly say to God,

————— THOU art my ALL !

My strength in age ! my rise in low estate !

My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth !—My world !

My light in darkness ! and my life in death !

My boast thro' time ! bliss thro' eternity.—

But to return. Although I imbibed his Lordship's refined notions of virtue, and for many years, at times, talked much in his Lordship's strain, I found those notions insufficient to preserve me from falling into some vicious courses. Nothing but the belief of the gospel could induce me entirely to renounce the vices and follies of the world, and to *live godly, righteously, and soberly* in so ungodly and dissipated an age. The motives held out by other systems are insufficient to restrain the passions and evil propensities of man.

Yet was I so attached to infidelity, and so blinded by it as not to believe its evil tendency, until for sometime I had observed how much the morals of men, in every rank and station, had suffered, in a great part of Europe ; and that every kind of vice was gaining ground in proportion as infidel books and principles were disseminated. I then began to

see



see that religion must before have had great influence on the morals of mankind, and in that point of view must be very valuable in society; and this brought on more serious reflections.

I have for many years taken in several of the Reviews of new publications, which are published monthly, and I now begin to read some of the extracts which the Reviewers make from sermons and other books in divinity. In those extracts I frequently found weighty arguments in favour of Christianity. About a year past, in this way, during which time I was in rather a careless suspense, and yet I was more attentive to my words and actions; and by degrees I began to relish divine subjects, and found that they elevated the mind and filled the soul with sublime ideas. I now began to read a little in the Bible, and took some pleasure in it; and I became more and more serious and thoughtful. I had nearly finished a second volume of my Life, which I intended soon to publish. I now read it over again, and cropped out and put in again and again, as I thought that I had treated serious subjects with too much levity; but after all the alterations I was not satisfied that in writing against fanaticism and enthusiasm, I had not said what might hurt some weak Christians, or what might be by freethinkers brought against Christianity. I was now also afraid, lest by ridiculing and laughing at enthusiasm and fanaticism, I should not only laugh some out of their enthusiasm, but of their religion also. For these, and other reasons of the same nature, I thought it best not to publish it, by which I have disappointed some of my laughter-loving acquaintance.

As soon as I had acquired a relish for religious subjects, I wished to promote it in others, and therefore begun with Mrs. Lackington. Mrs. L. is in her moral conduct one of the most perfect beings I ever saw.

“Her life’s as moral as the preacher’s tongue.”

Her reason for being so was, "because she always thought she ought to be as good as she could." She, like some other ladies, had studied well, and very well understood the art of dressing elegantly, but had not the least knowledge of religion beyond that of being as good as she could; and by the bye it were to be wished that all ladies even knew as much as that. As to going to church, or private devotion, she could not see of what use it could be to her. As she wanted for nothing, she did not know what she should pray for, she had never done any person any harm; she had never slandered, backbited, or ridiculed any person, nor did she know that she committed any other sin, and so she had no need of praying for pardon.

In this state of affairs I sent to my late partners for Secker's Lectures on the Catechism, Gilpin's Lectures on the same, Wilson's Sermons, 4 vols. and Gilpin's Sermons. These are very plain discourses, easy to be understood, and calculated to leave a very lasting impression on the mind. These excellent sermons Mrs. L. and I read together, and while they convinced her, that being "as good as she could" was perfectly right, and of the utmost importance; yet that there was something more in religion. They also made me more in love with Christianity. I also sent for Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, in Letters to T. Paine; Bishop Porteus's Compendium of the Evidences of Christianity, Butler's Divine Analogy, Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Pilgrim's Good Intent, Pascal's Thoughts, Addison's Evidences of Christianity, Conibeare on Revealed Religion, Madam de Genlis's Religion the only Basis of Happiness and sound Philosophy, with Observations on pretended modern Philosophers, 2 vols. Jenkin's Reasonableness and Certainty of Christianity, and several others of the same tendency. Those excellent defences of revealed religion I read through, during which I had many struggles; in the beginning I sometimes cried

cried out in the words of Thomas, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief:" before I had read out those defences, I was not only almost, but altogether persuaded to be a Christian. And I hope that I shall always endeavour to live as becometh the gospel of Christ; and, at times, I feel an humble confidence that God has, or will, pardon all my past sins for the sake of Christ, and by his grace enable me to persevere in well doing to the end of this transitory life, and then admit me into that state where the wonders of his grace, and the mysteries of his providence shall be more clearly understood.

I meant to inform you, that besides those books already mentioned, I sent for Bishop Horne's Sermons, 4 vols. Carr's Sermons, Blair's Sermons, 5 vols. Scott's Christian Life, 5 vols. several learned and sensible expositions of the Bible; Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible, with the Fragments; Josephus's Works, Prideaux's Connections, 4 vols. Mrs. H. More's Works, and various other excellent Works. For some time one sermon was read on every Sunday, but soon Mrs. L. began to like them, and then two or three were read in the course of the week; at last one at least was read every day, and very often part of some other book in divinity, as Mrs. L. said that she preferred such kind of reading far beyond the reading of novels. So that for some time we have read more books in divinity than on any other subjects; and now Mrs. L. sees very important reasons for going to church, sacrament, &c.

I am, Sir,

your's, &c.

*Alveston, Feb. 20th, 1803.*

J. L."

I have now given the whole of what I wrote to Mr. D. and will add no more, but that

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XI.

Silent I've seen, and with a pitying eye  
 Your follies mark'd, and unadmonish'd left,  
 Though tenderly lamenting ! Yet at last,  
 —If haply not too late my friendly call  
 Strike on deaf ears. Oh, profit by that call !  
 And to the grave approach, its alarms  
 Weigh with me, all considerate ! Brief time  
 Advances quick in tread ; few hours and dark  
 Remain : those hours in frivolous employ  
 Waste not impertinent ; they ne'er return !  
 Nor deem it dulness to stand still and pause  
 When dread Eternity hath claims so high.

DR. DODD.

Lorenzo ! this black brotherhood renounce :  
 Renounce St. Evremont and read St. Paul.  
 Ere wrapt by Miracle, by Reason wing'd,  
 His mounting mind made long Abode in heav'n.

YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

THE following letters were sent to  
 Tom Thoughtless, an infidel, whose vices brought  
 ruin on himself, and also on his family.

“ Sir,

After so many years, you will perhaps be surprised to see my bad hand-writing again.—A short time since, I found among my books a thin folio MS. in turning it over, I found copies of letters which passed between you and me in the years 1777, and 1778 : I read them over with much concern, as I found in some of mine to you I had endeavoured to weaken your belief in the divine authority of the Scriptures, and some of the blessed doctrines which they contain. My knowledge is very circumscribed now, but at that time it was much more so, as I was but very little acquainted with men, and less with books, so that it is not surprising that I should  
 not



not be able to detect the sophistical arguments, and other vile arts of Chubb, Tyndal, Morgan, Collins, Shaftesbury, Voltaire, &c. Nor was it possible that I should be able to detect the misrepresentations and wrong translations of many texts of scripture, and of passages from Greek and Latin authors, that are to be found in their works. The next twenty years I procured nearly every book in the English language that favoured the cause of infidelity, and employed much of my spare time in reading them, without reading the many able confutations that had been published to expose their folly and wickedness: and as I scarcely ever attended any place of divine worship, it was scarcely possible for me, under these circumstances, to return to the path of truth. My return was also rendered more difficult by my conduct in life, for I fell into some of the vices and follies of the age, and vice never fails to drive us further from truth and God:---If one who indulges himself in sinful practices should, like Pilate, ask What is truth? he does not wait for an answer, but dissolves the court of Conscience.

During those years I was also, as you know, taken up with the concerns of a very large business; and, I am sorry to add, the great profits that I derived from that business, rather tended to drive from my thoughts those important concerns with which they should, more or less, always be occupied. But I am able to say, that although I got money very fast, particularly during the two last years that I was in business, and lived in an expensive style; yet I never so far lost my reason as to suppose that riches, or a vain parade, could ever make me happy. My leisure hours were mostly spent in retirement at my country-house. There I read those publications that have been sent into the world by infidels. I also there read poetry, plays, novels, voyages, travels, history, &c. &c.

As I was not infatuated by the love of riches, or grandeur, it was with pleasure I first took partners  
D 4 into

into my very profitable trade, on very easy terms to them, and soon after that disposed of the whole concern. It is now near eight years since I first retired to this place, nor have I been in London since. I retained a share of my business for about two years and half after I came here, and then made over the whole to my cousin, Mr. George Lackington, and those gentlemen who were my partners before.

In this retreat, I pursued the same course of reading, until I was roused from my careless state of mind, by observing the dreadful effects which had succeeded the spreading of infidelity. The more I reflected, the more was I filled with horror at the moral depravity that I saw increasing among all ranks. From those reflections I was soon led to conclude that the works which had produced such baleful effects, must be fatally wrong. By degrees I laid my freethinking books aside, and begun once more to study my Bible. To assist me in that study I sent for several learned, sensible commentaries on the scriptures, and also for many other books in divinity, including the best answers that had been made to writers on the side of infidelity; so that I am now convinced of their sophistry.—Misrepresentations, unfair quotations, and other vile arts with which their works abound.

I had also again recourse to Young's Night Thoughts. The 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Nights, are replete with strong arguments against infidelity, so that I can scarcely think it possible for the most confirmed infidel, who is capable of understanding the force of the arguments, and will read them with proper attention, to help being convinced of the truth of Christianity. But it is a melancholy truth, that vice greatly tends to stupify the mind, and often makes us blind to divine truths; the late pious Bishop Horne says, "Midnight overwhelmeth not the earth with a grosser darkness, than that which is superinduced upon the heart of man, when it  
"departeth

“ departeth from God, and is turned away from  
“ its Maker. ‘ He that followeth not Christ  
“ walketh in darkness,’ because the light of life  
“ shineth no longer upon his tabernacle.”

I have for some years been acquainted with the history of Greece, and with the various opinions of the Grecian philosophers, yet the new and pleasing form in which it is dressed up in Barthelemy's Travels of Anarcharsis, induced me to read it again lately, and by reading it I was confirmed in the belief of the truths contained in the gospel. The truly great and good men of Greece, hundreds of years before Christ came, discovered that man had departed from his original state of purity ; that happiness in this life was only to be attained by a virtuous conduct : they also taught the immortality of the soul, a future judgment, and that the vicious should be punished, and the virtuous rewarded in another world.

The shallow, superficial, pretended philosophers of our day, affect to disbelieve the Christian doctrines. Many of the philosophers, and other great men of Greece and Rome, who lived in the time of the Apostles and their immediate successors, who had every opportunity of inquiring into the truth of what they asserted concerning Christ, his miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, his sending down the Holy Spirit, miraculous gifts, &c. Those philosophers, statesmen, courtiers, &c. were so thoroughly convinced of the truth of what the apostles and followers of Christ asserted, and of the doctrines they taught, that they openly professed themselves to be Christians, although they well knew that by so doing, they should be deprived of their riches, pomp and grandeur ; they gladly embraced a life of poverty, ignominy, and suffering ; and at last shed their blood in the glorious cause.

The scorching fire, the racking wheel,  
The scourging rod, and bloody steel ;

Each ruthless instrument of pain  
 That Tyranny could e'er devise,  
 Or hellish foes inflict, were vain,  
 To shake the courage of the skies !  
 Your hopes no earthly terrors could subdue ;  
 Consummate happiness appear'd in view.

COURTIER.

Our freethinkers reject the miracles wrought by Christ and his followers, and yet they would have us believe far greater miracles ; as they would persuade us, that a poor carpenter's son, without books, or even a place to lay his head, yet that this poor houseless man, and a few plain fishermen, were able, of themselves, to lay down the most perfect system of morality that ever was taught by mortals, and by so doing, exceed all the most learned, the wisest and best lawgivers, and philosophers, that ever the world have produced : and that those fishermen should give up all their former prejudices and religious notions, should quit all their friends and acquaintance, and embrace a life of poverty, endure unspeakable hardships, submit to the greatest sufferings, imprisonments, and the most painful deaths. And all this to propagate (according to infidels) what they must know to be a falsehood.

So that infidels who charge Christians with being credulous, are far more so themselves, they being in reality the most credulous beings in the world. Moreover, infidels know that not a particle of divisible matter can perish, yet would they have us believe that the soul, which is spiritual, immaterial, indivisible, and immortal, can be annihilated.

There is yet a greater absurdity which they would have us believe, viz. that millions of effects have taken place without a cause, or that second causes may, and actually do exist without a first.

Now, when you learn that I read and seriously



ously reflect as above, I presume you will not be much surprised that I should again return like the poor prodigal, and acknowledge that I have sinned against heaven.

I must also inform you, that I have seen the most dreadful effects of infidelity, not only amongst mankind in general, but also amongst my acquaintance; some, who before they commenced free-thinkers, were upright, honest, industrious men, and as such were prosperous in their various lines of business; on turning freethinkers became knaves and cheats, debauchees, &c. Several of these you well know; their vile conduct is also well known to you, nor are you ignorant of the ruin that they brought on themselves and families. I think you also knew A. B. and his brother; they, it is true, retained their honest principles; but they learned very bad habits, took to drinking and debauchery, which brought on A. B. dreadful disorders; he lived some years in a miserable state, and died about three years since. His brother died a year before him. You also know that D. C. turned freethinker near thirty years since, shut up his shop, left his wife and children to the parish, or to the wide world, sunk down among the dregs of society in London, and about twenty years since was turned out of the Lock-Hospital incurable; when I was in T—n last June, he was in the poor-house in a miserable state of body, and, no doubt, of mind also. J. D. whom, with other jovial companions, perhaps you, when you was in London, saw, died soon after that time. T. A. ran off, and left five poor servant girls with child by him. I have never since heard of him. I have not time to give you account of others.

What horrid effects the principles of freethinkers have had on yourself, your wife, and brother, I leave you to reflect on; I must just remark, that you and your brother might now have been genteel tradesmen, your wife might have been still alive

and happy, and each of your families decently brought up in the principles of religion and virtue.

It is well known, that thousands by becoming unbelievers have forsaken their religious and moral habits, and become depraved and miserable in both body and mind. Many have been reduced to such an extremely wretched state as not to be able to bear the miseries which they had brought on themselves, and so have cut short that life which was become a pest to society, and an intolerable burthen to themselves. Others have taken leave of this world under the gallows, and some are in the road to it. I am, Sir, sorry that your conduct has for many years prevented me from subscribing myself,

Your friend,

*Alveston, Feb. 25th, 1803.*

J. L."

Although I have transcribed so long a letter, yet I must inform you, that soon after R. W. became a freethinker, his wife became not only a free-thinker, but a *free-actor*. They lived at some rate together for many years ; at last a separation took place, but she proving with child while separated from her husband, to hide her disgrace took something to cause an abortion, which destroyed her own life.

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XII.

————— He breath'd out his soul,  
Not daring to put up one prayer for peace  
At his dark journey's end ; but trembling, wild,  
Confus'd, of reason as of hope bereft.

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

Convinc'd by fatal proofs, the Atheist here  
Yields to the sharp tormenting evidence.

The

The Libertine his folly here laments,  
 His blind extravagance, that made him sell  
 Unfading bliss, and everlasting crowns,  
 Immortal transports, and celestial feasts,  
 For the short pleasure of a sordid sin,  
 For one fleet moment's despicable joy.  
 Too late, all lost, for ever lost,  
 Gives to his soul perpetual wounds.

E. ROWE.

Oh, Conscience, into what abyss of fears  
 And horrors hast thou driven me ; out of which  
 I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd !

MILTON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I Will now transcribe a copy of my  
 second letter to Tom Thoughtless.

“ Sir,

I know not of any sight so shocking as that of a poor self-condemned infidel on a sick bed. While he suffers the most acute bodily pain, he has no cordial to cheer his drooping spirits. No ! his mind labours under the most gloomy apprehensions ! Those joyous companions with whom he used to dissipate his time and substance, are so far from giving him any comfort, that the sight of any of them adds to his misery ; he is ready to curse them in the bitterness of his soul, for having been instrumental in perverting him.—The weaker his body grows, the more strong does he find that reasoning faculty within him, and which he fancied would die with the body. How gladly would he exchange states with his dog that licks his burning hand, which in anguish he throws over the side of his bed. When in health he degraded himself to a brute, and now he envies the beast, and looks upon him as a superior being. Annihilation, at which one's soul sudders, and which nature abhors, would now be a happy relief ; but he is too late convinced that his soul can never cease to exist. Young says,

Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die.

While

While in health; and high spirits, with his sceptical companions about him, he could laugh at religion, and at hell, and even pass his jokes on the awful Majesty of heaven and earth; and call his existence in question: could represent Christ as a fanatic, a lunatic, or as a downright impostor. This shocking delusion is now over, he now finds that the eyes and hand of God are upon him, and that he must soon be dragged to his awful tribunal: Now he would give worlds to have an interest in that divine Intercessor, whom he has so often laughed at and despised; black despair now seizes his mind, not a ray of hope can pierce through the gloomy horrors of his soul; pray he cannot, nor has he a wish so to do: his hell is already begun, and he dreads a worse to come; at last he expires in tortures not to be described.

In that dread moment, how the frantic soul  
 Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,  
 Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help;  
 But shrieks in vain!--How wishfully she looks  
 On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!  
 A little longer, yet a little longer,  
 Oh might she stay, to wash away her stains  
 And fit her for her passage!--Mournful sight!  
 Her very eyes weep blood;---and every groan  
 She heaves is big with horror.--But the foe,  
 Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,  
 Pursues her close through every lane of life,  
 Nor misses once the track, but presses on;  
 Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,  
 At once she sinks to everlasting ruin!

I did not intend to quote so much, yet I cannot help transcribing the following narration from Dr. Young's *Centaur* not *Fabulous*.

"I am about to represent to you the last hours of  
 "a person of high birth, and great parts.

"The *death-bed* of a profligate is next in horror  
 "to that abyss to which it leads. And he that has  
 "seen it, has more than *faith* to confirm him in  
 "his creed. I see it now, For who can forget it?—

"Are



“ Are there no flames and furies ?—You know not,  
“ then, what a guilty heart can feel. How dismal  
“ it is ? The two great enemies of soul and body,  
“ *Sickness* and *Sin* sink and confound his friend ;  
“ silence and darken the shocking scene. *Sickness*  
“ excludes the light of heaven ; and *Sin* its blessed  
“ hope. *Oh ! double darkness.*

“ See, how he lies, a sad deserted outcast, on a  
“ narrow isthmus, between time and eternity ! For  
“ he is scarce alive. Lashed and overwhelmed on  
“ one side, by the sense of sin ; on the other, by  
“ the dread of punishment ! Beyond the reach of  
“ human help, and in despair of divine !

“ The ghost of his murdered time, (for now no  
“ more is left,) all stained with folly, and gashed  
“ with vice, haunts his distracted thought. *Con-*  
“ *science*, which long had slept awakes. Its late  
“ soft whispers are *thunder* in his ears ; and all  
“ means of grace rejected, exploded, ridiculed, is  
“ the bolt that strikes him dead. He lies a  
“ wretched wreck of man on the shore of eternity,  
“ and the next breath he draws blows him off into  
“ ruin.

“ The greatest profligate is, at least, a momen-  
“ tary saint, at such a sight ; for this is a sight that  
“ plucks off the mask of folly, strips her of her gay  
“ disguise, which glittered in the false lights of this  
“ world’s mummery, and make her appear to be  
“ folly, to the greatest fool.

“ Is not the death-bed of a profligate the most  
“ natural and powerful antidote for the poison of  
“ his example ? Heals not the bruised scorpion the  
“ wound it gave ? Intends not Heaven, that, struck  
“ with the terrors of such an exit, we should pro-  
“ vide comfort for our own ? Would not he, who  
“ departs obdurate from it, continue adamant,  
“ though one rose from the dead ? For such a scene  
“ partly draws aside the curtain that divides time  
“ and futurity ; and in some measure, gives to sight  
“ that

“ that *tremendous*, of which we only had the feeble  
 “ report before.

“ An agonizing profligate, though *silent*, out-  
 “ preaches the most celebrated that the pulpit ever  
 “ knew : but if he *speaks*, his words might instruct  
 “ the best instructors of mankind.—Mixt in the  
 “ warm converse of life, we think with men ; on a  
 “ death-bed with God.

“ The sad evening before the death of that noble  
 “ youth, whose last hours suggested these thoughts,  
 “ I was with him. No one was there, but his  
 “ physician, and an intimate whom he loved, and  
 “ whom he had ruined. At my coming in he said ;  
 “ You and the physician are come too late.—I  
 “ have neither life nor hope. You both aim at mi-  
 “ racles, you would raise the dead.”

“ I said, Heaven was merciful.—(He replied,)

“ Or I could not have been thus guilty. What  
 “ has it not done to *bless* and to *save* me ? I have  
 “ been too strong for Omnipotence ! I have plucked  
 “ down ruin.”

“ I said the Blessed Redeemer.—(On which he  
 “ said,)

“ Hold ! Hold ! You wound me !—That is the  
 “ rock on which I split—I denied his name.”

“ Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take  
 “ any thing from the physician, he lay silent, as far  
 “ as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the  
 “ clock struck. Then he with vehemence cried  
 “ out,

“ Oh, Time ! Time ! It is fit thou shouldest  
 “ thus strike thy murderer to the heart.—How art  
 “ thou fled for ever !—A month !—Oh, for a single  
 “ week ! I ask not for years ; though an age were  
 “ too little for the much I have to do.”

“ On my saying, We could not do too much :  
 “ that heaven was a blessed place !—(He said)

“ So much the worse. 'Tis lost ! Heaven is to  
 “ me the severest part of hell.”

“ Soon

" Soon after, I proposed prayer. (On which he said,)

" Pray you that can. I never prayed.—Nor need

" I. Is not heaven on my side already? It closes

" with my conscience. Its severest strokes but se-

" cond my own."

" His friend being much touched, even to tears, at this (who could forbear? I could not), with a most affectionate look, he said :

" Keep those tears for thyself. I have undone thee.—Dost weep for me? That's cruel. What can pain me more?"

" Here is friend, too much affected, would have left him. But he said, " No, stay. *Thou* still mayest *hope*.—Therefore hear me. How madly I have talk'd? How madly thou hast listened and believed? But look on my present state, as a full answer to thee and myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason; full mighty to suffer. And that, which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is doubtless *immortal*.—And as for a *Deity*, nothing less than an *Almighty* could inflict what I feel."

" I was about to speak, when he very passionately said,

" No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak.—My much injured friend! my soul, as my body, lies in ruins; in scattered fragments of broken thought; remorse for the past throws my thought on the future. Worse dread of the future, strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake; and bless heaven for the flames:—that is not an everlasting flame; *that* is not an unquenchable fire."

" How were we struck? Yet, soon after, still  
" more!

“ more ! With what an eye of distraction, with  
 “ what a face of despair, he cried out,

“ My principles have poisoned my friend ; my  
 “ extravagance has beggared my boy ; my unkind-  
 “ ness has murdered my wife ! And is there ano-  
 “ ther hell ?—Oh, thou blasphemed, yet most indul-  
 “ gent, Lord God ! Hell itself is a refuge, if it  
 “ hides me from thy frown.”

“ Soon after his understanding failed. His terri-  
 “ fied imagination uttered horrors not to be re-  
 “ peated, or ever forgot. And ere the sun arose,  
 “ the gay, young, noble, ingenious, accomplished,  
 “ and most wretched, Altamont expired.”

Man, foolish man ! no more thy soul deceive !

To die is but the surest way to live.

BROOME.

I believe we should have many such dreadful examples on record, were clergymen called to visit the death-bed of infidels, as in this case ; but few infidels will consent for that to be done ; for although they may see that they have been fatally mislead ; yet a state of desperation will prevent them from calling on God themselves, or requesting any one to do it for them.—But to return to myself. I must inform you, that it was not by merely reading of defences of Christianity, &c. that I was enabled to discover its truth, and believe its doctrines. I was for sometime in a state of suspense, doubt and distraction. But soon the pure precepts of the gospel began to have some influence on my life and conversation ; as I perceived that the morality taught by Christ was infallibly right, and I resolved to regulate my conduct according to his instructions, at least as much as I could : I left off cursing and swearing, filthy talking, &c. By caution, I soon was able, in a great measure, to refrain from breaking out into violent passions on small provocations : to be short, I endeavoured to resist every evil propensity and disposition, and I prayed for divine assistance to enable me so to do ; and soon found my-  
 self



self much freed from evil words, actions, and thoughts ; and found much satisfaction in my mind on being able to conquer bad habits.

I had not long lived as much like a Christian as I could, before I began to believe like one. The words of Christ were verified in me. *If, saith he, ye will do the will of God, ye shall know of the doctrines which I teach, whether they be of God.* And I cannot help believing, that such as truly and sincerely perform their duty towards God and man, will, by some means or other, be led to the knowledge and belief of all such truths as are absolutely necessary to be believed. But while we are guilty of impiety towards God, and of doing to our neighbours as we would not that they should do to us ; it is no wonder if we should *ever be learning, and never be able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

By this time I can scarcely think it possible for you not to see that the Christian has very great advantages over an infidel. Infidelity tends to degrade and sink the man to a brute. Christianity dignifies and exalts its votaries to the skies.

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Man all immortal, hail !  
 Hail, heav'n !—All-lavish of strange gifts to man !  
 Thine all the glory ; man's the boundless Bliss :  
 Oh, may I breathe no longer, than I breathe  
 My soul in praise to Him, who gave my soul,  
 And all her infinite of prospect fair.

DR. YOUNG.

Devotion elevates the soul to its native dignity ; when renewed by divine grace it as naturally tends to the great source of its happiness, as fire does towards the sun, or as water towards the sea. While others are saying, *Who will shew us any good ? Who will shew us the way to be happy ?* The Christian says, *Lift up thou the light of thy countenance upon me.* You know where it is also said, that *God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon him.* In all the changes and troubles of this mortal state he has a divine cordial to refresh

refresh and cheer his spirits when weak and faint ; even death itself cannot terrify him who stedfastly believes in him *who is the resurrection and the life*. No one ever heard of a Christian that was troubled, or terrified in his conscience when he came to die, for having been a Christian ; but on the contrary, tens of thousands have in their last hours, set their seal to the truth of its divine doctrines, and have quitted this life in *certain hope and joyful expectation of a blessed immortality*.

The chamber where the good man meets his fate,  
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk  
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heav'n :  
—— Here resistless demonstration dwells ;  
A death-bed's a detector of the heart.  
Here tir'd dissimulation drops her mask.  
Heav'n waits not the last moment ; owns her friends  
On this side death ; and points them out to man ;  
To vice confusion, and to virtue peace.

## NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Before I bid you farewell for ever, I beg you to excuse my giving you the trouble of reading two such long letters, as I could not rest satisfied in my mind, if I had not informed you of the alteration that has taken place in my sentiments, and of course in my life. If you will read with attention any or the whole of the following books and pamphlets, viz. Addison's Evidences of Christianity, Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, in Letters to Paine; Bishop Porteus's Compendium of the Evidences of Christianity, Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Jenkin's Reasonableness and Certainty of Christianity, Madam de Genlis's Religion the only Basis of Happiness and Sound Philosophy. If you will read some of these, I think that you also will see what a dreadful delusion you have for so many years been under. Should that not be the case, I would wish you to remember that a Christian has greatly the advantage of you. Were it possible for him to be in a delusion, it must be a happy delusion that  
affords

affords such sources of comforts in this state of existence, and even in the hour of death. And in case there should be no future state, you will not be able to laugh at him. But should the infidel be in a delusion ! The dye, the fatal dye ! will then be cast, and all will be lost for ever !

I am, Sir,  
Your's,

*Alveston, Feb. 27th, 1803.*

J. L."

Although I have transcribed this very long letter, yet I must inform you, that the person to whom this and the preceding one were wrote, leads so bad a life, that I have but small hopes that they will make any lasting impression on him.

---

Heedless man from sin,  
To sin, runs onward in his mad career,  
Nor once takes warning of his better guide,  
Till at the barriers of life's little span  
Arriv'd, he stops : death opens to his view  
A hideous gulph ; in vain he looks around  
For the lost seraph Hope ; beside him stands  
The tyrant fiend, and urges to the brink ;  
Behind him black Despair with threat'ning frown  
And gorgon shield, whose interposed orb  
Bars all retreat, and with its shade involves  
Life's brighter prospects in one hideous night.—

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

I am,  
Dear friend,  
Your's.

LETTER

## LETTER XIII.

——— “ Those dreadful dangers past,  
 “ Knowledge will dawn, and bless the mind at last.”

——— Frown not, if the labouring mind  
 Is still perplex'd ; if yet his thoughts demand,  
 Why Wisdom infinite, whose ways are peace ;  
 Whose plan perfection ; to so lame a guide  
 So long consign'd the helm ? Why on the soul  
 Flash'd not immediate vision,  
 To point the path to truth ?

OGILVIE'S PROVIDENCE.

DEAR FRIEND,

NOT many miles from this place  
 lives my old friend Dick Thrifty, who was introduced  
 to you in a former letter. I lately paid him a visit,  
 and soon suspected that some alteration had taken  
 place in Dick's sentiments from the change which I  
 perceived in his conduct. I informed you, that after  
 Dick commenced freethinker he was not always  
 able to resist the temptations of immodest women.  
 At this interview I remarked that he was disgusted  
 with a genteel dressed man for having talked loosely  
 in the absence of the ladies ; he repeated the two  
 well known lines of Pope,

Immodest words admit of no defence,  
 For want of decency is want of sense.

I also observed that he was displeased with another of the company for speaking disrespectfully of the clergy in general. “ Whenever I hear (said Dick) any person vilify the clergy as a body, I am obliged to conclude that he is not only an enemy to religion, but also a foe to morality, and of course a very great enemy to society. I think it is Addison who says, That such as are prejudiced against the names religion, church, priest, and the like, should consider the clergy as so many philosophers, the churches



churches as schools, and their sermons as lectures for the reformation and improvement of their audience. How would the heart of Socrates or Tully have rejoiced had they lived in a nation where the law had made provision for philosophers to read lectures of morality and theology, every seventh day, in several schools erected at the public charge, through the whole country; at which lectures, all ranks and sexes, without distinction, were obliged to be present for their general improvement. And what wicked wretches would they think those men who should endeavour to defeat the purpose of so divine an institution!"

I was also glad to find that Dick was a great encourager of Sunday-schools, and also of day-schools for the poor who are unable to pay for their children's schooling. He informed me that some gentlemen of his neighbourhood were averse to such schools, merely because they wished not to subscribe a trifle toward their support; and yet, said he, those gentlemen think themselves Christians!

It perhaps may appear rather odd, but I remember that, many years since, Dick, although a free-thinker, never liked to hear thoughtless young men speak against religion, but would even take pains to convince them that they were ignorant of what they were finding fault with; that they were enemies to religion because it condemned them for their irregularities. He would even tell them that they were only planting thorns in their sick or death-beds. I even recollect that when a young man was once arguing against the being of the Deity, that he lent him Knight, on the Being and Attributes of God, and very seriously advised him to read it with attention; and this too at a time when he was very sceptical himself: But I strongly suspect that Dick is quite altered in his principles.

Formerly, Dick used to assert that all the precepts of morality contained in the gospel were taught by the heathen philosophers. But now he is convinced

convinced of his mistake, and he has discovered that their best precepts were derived from divine revelation, partly through the Jews who were scattered amongst all nations, and partly from the Old Testament after it was translated into Greek. Josephus has fully proved this point.

Formerly, Dick thought that Socrates was a more exalted personage than Christ; now he asserts, that Christ was a far superior character to Socrates, and that the morality which he taught is the most pure, and best calculated to make mankind happy,—that a nation of *real* Christians would be a heaven upon earth.

Some years since, Dick would talk much about the charming liberty of thinking freely, enjoyed by such as shake off the fetters which the priests had rivetted on mankind; now he does not scruple to acknowledge that, upon the whole, he thinks a real Christian has greatly the advantage, even in this life, of the unbeliever. I can, (said he to a friend one day,) almost believe Bishop Horne's description of the Christian religion. He then took down a volume of the good Bishop's sermons, and read the following passage:

“ A religion cheerful in itself, and making those  
 “ cheerful who are partakers of it; cheerful in trou-  
 “ ble; cheerful out of trouble; cheerful while they  
 “ live; cheerful when they die; cheerful in using  
 “ well the blessings of this life; cheerful in expect-  
 “ ing the blessings of the next; cheerful through  
 “ pain, while they believe in the great and precious  
 “ promises made to them; cheerful through hope,  
 “ which depends on their accomplishment; cheer-  
 “ ful through charity, in doing acts of mercy and  
 “ loving kindness; till they come to that land of  
 “ plenty where none shall want; to those regions  
 “ of joy from whence sorrow shall be for ever ex-  
 “ cluded.”

While my friend Dick was reading the above passage he seemed animated; he was much more so  
 while

while I read the following lines from Dr. Young's Night Thoughts.

Religion's ALL. Descending from the skies  
 To wretched man, the goddess in her left  
 Holds out this world, and in her right the next;  
 Religion! the sole voucher man is man;  
 Supporter sole of Man above him left;  
 Ev'n in this night of frailty, change and death,  
 She gives the soul a soul that acts a god.  
 Religion! Providence! an after-state!  
*Here* is firm footing; here is solid rock;  
 This can support us; all is sea besides,  
 Sinks under us; bestorms and then devours.  
 His hand the *good man* fastens on the skies,  
 And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.

---      ---      ---      ---      ---  
 Believe, and shew the reason of a man;  
 Believe, and taste the pleasure of a god;  
 Believe, and look with pleasure on the tomb.

Dick is rather shy in discovering what his real sentiments now are; but from what I have noticed I have reason to think that he is really convinced of his errors; and that if he already is not a Christian, he wishes to become one. But when a person has once gone such lengths in infidelity as Dick had, it is hard to return to that pure, open simplicity which the gospel requires of such as profess to believe its doctrines. As Dick's conversation is different from what it used to be, so also is his conduct, as I remarked in many instances. His compassion for the labouring poor is much increased, and he does much good among them; he not only relieves such as apply to him, but he inquires after objects of distress; and, at the same time, he is careful not to encourage idleness, drunkenness, &c.

You perhaps may remember that in the comedy of "Every One has his Fault," which came out at Covent-Garden about a dozen years since, there is a good character, called, I think, Mr. Placid, and performed by Mr. Mordin. I was the more pleased with that character, because I had known my friend

Dick act that part in real life before it was performed on the stage.

Mr. D. and Mr. C. were near neighbours to each other, and acquaintances of Dick; these neighbours had conceived great animosity to each other; Dick set about reconciling them. One day, when Mr. D. was speaking very ill-naturedly of Mr. C. Dick desired him not to bear Mr. C. so much ill-will, for, said he, I have heard Mr. C. speak very well of you. This softened Mr. D. a good deal. At another time Mr. C. was very violent in his conversation against Mr. D. Dick advised him to forget and forgive, as he was persuaded Mr. D. had done; he speaks kindly of you, and is, I believe, sorry that trifles should so long have interrupted good neighbourhood between you and him. By this method Dick in a short time made them better friends than they had ever been before. *Blessed is the peace-maker*, saith Christ. Dick is still happy if he can reconcile any of his acquaintance to each other; but he now will not effect it by saying what is not strictly true, as he did in the above instances; he seems to know that a man must *not lie even for God*.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER



## LETTER XIV.

“Has *virtue charms?*”—I grant her heav’nly Fair;  
 But if unportion’d all will int’reſt wed;  
 Tho’ that our admiration, *this* our choice:  
 The virtues grow on *immortality*;  
 That Root destroy’d they wither and expire.  
 A Deity *believ’d* will naught avail;  
 Rewards and *punishments* make God ador’d;  
 And *hopes* and *fears* give *conscience* all her pow’r.  
 As in the dying parent dies the child,  
*Virtue*, with *immortality*, expires. DR. YOUNG.

Isca-riot thus false adoration paid,  
 Hail’d when he seiz’d, saluted and betray’d.

WESLEY.

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“Ye baptized infidels!  
 “Ye worse for mending! wash’d to fouler stains!”

DEAR FRIEND,

IN giving you my further observations on Dick Thrifty I will continue to set them down as nearly as I can, as they occurred.

I found him one morning with Law’s Serious Call to a Holy Life, and Taylor’s Holy Living and Holy Dying, by his side; in his hand was the Whole Duty of Man. What! a philosopher reading the “Whole Duty of Man?” Had you been reading Puffendorf’s Law of Nature, I should not have wondered at it. The reply was, “Let me tell you it is worth any philosopher’s reading; from what I have read of it, I think it an excellent work.” I confessed that I had read but a small part of it; but from what I had read it appeared to me to be a very good work; I had sold thousands of that book, and scarce knew of any work that ever had so great and lasting a sale, it being a century and a half since it was first published; the other works of the same author have also had a great sale; his Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety should be read more than it is: his Ladies’ Calling, and

his Gentleman's Calling, are now much neglected, as most of our Ladies and Gentlemen have callings of a very different nature, or rather, as it appears, have no calling at all.

Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, he said, was also an excellent work. I also joined in its praise. Law, in his Serious Call, he thought, had some of the most convincing arguments he ever met with, and his Characters were master-pieces of the kind. I said, that I had lately read it with great pleasure, and I hoped with some profit."

But, Dick, have you discarded the old heathen moralists?

"No, I believe I shall sometimes dip into them as long as I live; I think, with you, that I have derived much benefit from reading them."

I told him, while I was reading Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, &c. I had often fancied myself a great philosopher, and conceited that my passions were subdued.

"Why that is just my case, and perhaps an hour after I have indulged those fine ideas, I suffer an old woman, or a servant, to disturb, or even destroy, my fine philosophical tranquillity; and then I am ashamed to find myself such a poor weak mortal."

"Virtue is kept alive by care and toil."

Dick continued, "I now have often recourse to divines; they write like men having authority, and they adduce stronger motives for us to subdue or regulate our passions and tempers; and I think they have much more influence on my conduct than the mere reasoning of the ancient philosophers. You know that formerly I read pretty much divinity, and although the intimacy was long broken off, by my having contracted an aversion to those pious writers, because they threatened free-thinkers with hell; yet we are become good friends again: so that whenever I look into any of those books,

books, it seems like calling on an old sensible acquaintance that I had not seen for many years; I am much pleased while conversing on old subjects; and, though I might not approve of every thing he says, yet the conversation upon the whole may be pleasing and improving."

Dick, said I, you used to be open and above disguise; I have freely confessed to you, that I have sincerely repented of my long apostacy from the truth, and humbly hope for pardon and salvation through that Saviour whom you and I despised: tell me, are not you also convinced of your error? Are you not in heart a Christian?

"An honest Deist, where the gospel shines,  
"Matur'd to nobler in the Christian ends."

"I confess," he replied, "that my sentiments are much altered, as you must have perceived. You and I have often read the same books, and made the same observations on men and things; so that you will not be much surprised if I have been affected pretty much like yourself, by remarking the same events. I shall carry my remarks further back than you have done. You know that before the French revolution took place I had some young men and boys in my house as apprentices and shopmen. I have reason to think that those young people were not ignorant of my sentiments, for as they dined with me and my friends, they must have, at times, heard free conversations, jokes on priests, &c. if not worse: for although I was not fond of propagating infidelity, yet from my friends, and perhaps from myself also, they must know that I paid no attention to religion. It is also likely that they read my free-thinking books. They also knew that I did not attend at any place of worship, nor did I require them to do it; that my whole family spent Sundays in idle amusements. Those young men left me, and began the world without any sense of religion.

Several of them, I believe, were freethinkers; nearly the whole of them dissipated the whole of what property they had of their own, got into debt, and became bankrupts. But though I saw the effects of infidelity in them, I was not properly affected by it. But since the French revolution, when I perceived the sad effects produced by the spreading of infidelity, I began to think more seriously on the consequences; but I was not fully acquainted with the extent of its mischief until I came into the country to live, and found that it had infected all ranks, from the castle to the cottage.

“ A new world rises and new manners reign.”

“ Gentlemen’s servants, having been taught infidelity in London, and while waiting at table, have spread the contagion throughout the region of their acquaintance. Paine’s Age of Reason has been handed from cottage to cottage. The honest and industrious part of the poor, amidst their poverty and afflictions, used to derive great consolation from the hopes of a better world to come; but Paine and Co. have deprived them of their only comfort and support, and left them discontented with their station, and ready for mischief. Many that used to be constant at church on Sundays, now go to the ale-house, where they encourage one another in irreligion and vice. Many that used to read their bibles in order to become better husbands, better fathers, better subjects, better neighbours, &c. now, if they look into it at all, it is only to endeavour to turn it into ridicule.

“ The hopes of heaven, and the fear of hell, I now am fully convinced certainly had very great influence on the conduct of thousands, who now laugh at any talk of the day of judgment, heaven and hell; and having got rid of those restraints, they indulge themselves in one vice after another, until no wickedness is too bad for them to commit.”

In



In proof of what you assert, (I replied,) permit me to inform you, that about two years since I made an excursion into the West of England; happening to spend a few hours in a large town through which I passed, I called on a very respectable tradesman, an old acquaintance of mine. While we were conversing in his shop on the great prevalence of infidelity and its immoral tendency, one of his neighbours, a very decent-looking man, came in, who, I learnt in the course of conversation had lately been a very wicked infidel and a rebel, but had repented of his infidelity and was become a loyal subject, and a pious Christian.

He informed us, that while he lived in London, (which was about four or five years before this conversation,) he worked in a shop with twelve other men, eleven of whom and himself were infidels, and that the whole of them were rebels. To such a height of wickedness and infatuation had these poor wretches arrived, that six of them set out one day with a fixed determination to kill ——, a certain person. In the Strand, one of the most desperate of these execrable villains was taken so very ill as to be able to go no further; but this did not deter the others, but on they went to perpetrate the dreadful deed, which they would have effected had not an uncommon circumstance taken place which prevented the horrid crime from being committed. This circumstance I cannot relate, as the mentioning that would discover the person they intended to murder.

I also observed that the doctrines of rewards and punishments were taught in a confused and imperfect manner by the old heathens; that the belief of those doctrines, and the fear of the avenging gods had very great influence on the moral conduct of mankind in general: and it is worth remarking that Juvenal, in his second satire, imputes the shocking and detestable crimes which disgraced Rome in his  
E 4 days

days to the infidel notions that then prevailed among them.

A life to come and righteous realms below,  
Virtue to crown, and deal to vice its woe;  
Much more a *sultry Charon at his ferry*,  
A *puddled Styx, horse, frogs, and crowded wherry*;  
Are now, tho' sacred deem'd in days of old,  
Tenets which none but arrant children hold.  
Hold thou thy father's creed; revere as true  
The faith from whence their generous virtues drew.

OWEN'S JUVENAL.

To what I said to my friend Dick I will now add a passage, which is given as a note, (page 44, &c.) in Mr. Hall's very excellent sermon at Cambridge.

"The testimony of POLYBIUS, to the beneficial effects which resulted from the Pagan superstition, in fortifying the sentiments of moral obligation, and supporting the sanctity of oaths, is so weighty and decisive, that it would be an injustice to the subject not to insert it; more especially as it is impossible to attribute it to the influence of credulity on the author himself, who was evidently a sceptic. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that all the benefits which might in any way flow from superstition, are secured to an incomparably greater degree by the belief of true religion.

"But among all the useful institutions," says Polybius, "that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps, is the opinion which people are taught to hold concerning the gods: and that, which other men regard as an object of disgrace, appears in my judgment to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained. I mean superstition; which is impressed with all its terrors, and influences the private actions of the citizens, and the public administration of the state, to a degree that can scarcely be exceeded.

"The ancients, therefore, acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions

tions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments; but much rather are those of the present age to be charged with rashness and absurdity in endeavouring to extirpate those opinions; for, not to mention other effects that flow from such an institution, if, among the Greeks, for example, a single talent only be entrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give written securities, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on the other hand, who in the course of their magistracies, and in embassies, disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed upon, by the single obligation of an oath, to perform their duty with inviolable honesty. And as, in other states, a man is rarely to be found whose hands are pure from public robbery, so, among the Romans, it is no less rare to discover one that is tainted with this crime."—*Hampton's Polybius*, vol. iii. 136.

“ Though the system of Paganism is justly condemned by reason and scripture, yet it assumed, as true, several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power; of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage; and the divine approbation of virtue: so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility; which is well stated by the great and judicious *Hooker*, in treating on this subject. ‘ Seeing therefore it doth thus appear,’ says that venerable author, ‘ that the safety of all states dependeth upon religion; that religion unfeignedly loved perfecteth man’s abilities unto all kinds of various services in the commonwealth; that men’s desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and whatever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain parts of the light of truth, intermingled with the darkness of error;

because no religion can wholly and only consist of truths, we have reason to think that all true virtues are to honour true *religion* as their parent, and all well-ordered common-weals love her as their chiefest stay."—Eccles. vol. xiii. 5.

That arch infidel Voltaire, who has been one of the greatest enemies to the cause of religion, in his *Philosopher's Dictionary*, under the word atheism, says, "But with submission to Plutarch, nothing can be more evident, than that it was better for the Greeks to stand in awe of Ceres, Neptune, and Jupiter, than to be under no manner of awe; the sacredness of oaths is manifest and necessary; and they that hold that perjury will be punished, are certainly more to be trusted, than those who think a false oath will be attended with no ill consequences. It is beyond all question, that in a policed city, even a bad religion is better than none."—"The Senate of Rome, which almost totally consisted of Atheists, both in theory and practice, believing neither in Providence nor a future state. It was a meeting of philosophers, of votaries of pleasure and ambition; all very dangerous sets of men, and who, accordingly, overturned the Republic."

"I would not willingly lie at the mercy of an atheistical prince, who might think it his interest to have me pounded in a mortar: I am certain it would be my fate. And were I a sovereign, I would not have about me any atheistical courtiers, whose interest it might be to poison me, as then I must every day be taking alexipharmics; so necessary is it both for princes and people, that their minds be thoroughly imbued with an idea of a Supreme Being, the Creator, Avenger, and Rewarder."

This subject is now no longer to be disputed at all, as we have seen such dreadful effects of infidelity since it has been propagated among the people at large.

"I confess, (said Dick,) that I was long in an error on this head. I, like many other freethinkers, on observing that fraud and other vices were committed by



by such as passed for Christians ; and, that, among those who were Sceptics, I knew several whom I thought honest men, I too readily concluded, that the belief or disbelief of a future state had but little or no influence on society, nor should I ever have been convinced of my error but for the manners of the times. The vile practices of some who call themselves Christians may easily be accounted for ; a great number of those have scarce any more religion than horses ; they live and die as ignorant and stupid with regard to divine subjects as hogs. So that in fact they cannot be said to believe or disbelieve in Christianity, although they are denominated Christians. I have reason to believe that there are thousands in England who never were in any place of divine worship in the whole course of their lives ; and many of those that do by chance go into a church, know no more of the matter than such do as never go at all. And there is great reason to think that many who pass for Christians are Atheists in principles, as well as practical knaves. A certain author says, “ I know there are in notion and principle, as well as in practice, who think all honesty as well as religion, a mere cheat ; and by a very consistent conduct, reasoning, have resolved deliberately to do whatsoever by power or *art* they are able for their private advantage. Such as these never open themselves in friendship to others. They have no such passion for truth or love of mankind. They have no quarrel with religion or morals ; they know what use to make of them both upon occasion. If ever they discover their principles it is only at unawares, they are sure to preach up honesty, to go to church.”

“ I was lately told of a grocer, who, on a Sunday evening, used to call his shopman, and address him in the following manner : “ John, have you put the dried berries with the currants ? ” “ Yes, Sir, ” “ Have you put the ash leaves with the tea ? ” “ Yes, Sir. ” “ Have you put the sand with the moist

moist sugar?" "Yes, Sir." "Then, John, come to prayer."

I will also give you one instance of this kind that fell within my own observation. About twelve months after I first became acquainted with a party of infidels, there was one very young man introduced who was an advocate for atheism, and yet he was a student, on charity, in a dissenting academy; and used to boast of the deceptions which he made use of to deceive the heads of the seminary. He informed us, that at the stated times of prayer, when they all kneeled down round the room, with their faces towards the walls, he used to conceal a card in his hand, on which he had a composed form, set down in short-hand. So that when it came to his turn to pray extemporally he read his card; and he was thought to possess a fine gift in prayer. This young infidel also boasted of the deceptions which he put on others; he would pretend to piety among religious people, and borrow books and sell them. Not long after this he deceived and took in his infidel friend, who introduced him to the party. He was for some reason or other at last discharged from the academy; had that not been the case, some congregation might have been deceived by his abilities and pretensions to piety, and have had an atheist for their pastor.

I have no doubt but this class of unbelievers is much larger than is commonly imagined. *Know ye not*, says Paul to the Corinthians, *that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom.* And yet how many are there to be found who deliberately commit those sins. How is it possible for one to suppose that such can believe the above text, and an hundred others of the same import. We know that a person may be precipitated into grievous sins, and yet may be called a believer, although a weak one; but is it possible

possible for a person to live year after year, in the deliberate commission of any great known sin, and really believe that *God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and reward every man according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or bad.* Indeed the scriptures rank such among *unbelievers*; and freethinkers should not rank them as believers, but among their own class. In Gilpin's 48th sermon, vol. 2, is the following passage: "I address myself next to those who pretend to believe the gospel, and yet neglect its precepts.

"There are many such Christians in the world,—Christians, who go generally to church,—who appear occasionally at the sacrament,—and who talk of the bible as the *best book in the world*; but yet, in fact, lead their lives as much at variance with it, as if it had never been intended as a rule of conduct. They are as much given up to the business, and pleasures, and vanities of life, as much led away by the fashions and dissipated manners which they see around them, as if they believed this world was the only place where they expected happiness. And yet they profess to believe in a religion that will reward all who obey it; and punish all who disobey it.

"If you really believe all this, the pleasures of this world will appear of little value to you, compared with the happiness of the next; and the severest restraints of religion, instead of being thought hardships, will be received with cheerfulness. Is this the case? If you are a true believer, the answer is plain; yet this contradiction between your belief and your practice, makes it, I fear, too plain, this is not the case. The matter, then, resolves itself into this, that you are in the situation with the infidel, only to his disbelief you add hypocrisy.

"If you are under the influence of *self-deceit*, and imagine you are more sincere in your belief of these things than you really are, put your sincerity to the test; try yourself by an easy experiment. You are assured,

assured, that if you take proper steps, you may get possession of a considerable fortune. If you really believe this information, how will you act? Will you not take every method in your power that leads to the possession of it? Our blessed Saviour has placed this matter in the same light. -If a man believed there was a treasure in a field, would he not sell all he had and buy the field? In the affairs of this world, you judge of a man's being sincere in his belief, by the sincerity of his practice. If he be under the influence of faith in common life, he never fails to shew his faith by its influence on his actions.

It is exactly the same in religion. You pretend to believe that you shall give an account hereafter of your actions,—that there is a heaven to reward, and a hell to punish them, as they are good or bad. You say you believe all this; but still it does not produce a Christian life. Away with such hypocritical pretences. Would any man leap from a precipice if he *really believed* a bottomless pit would receive him? Those who pretend to no faith, and those who pretend to faith, but leave a holy life out of the question, are both infidels alike."

Some of those ungodly pretenders to Christianity are so very ignorant of its doctrines as to think that because Christ died for sinners; (which is the only part of the gospel they ever attended to,) think that God will, however wicked their lives may have been, pardon them, provided they do but repent, as they call it, on their death-beds. Old Baxter tells us of a shocking wicked man who persisted in a very profligate way of life, because he was sure that if he could but say three words, "God pardon me," before he died, he was sure to be forgiven. It seems he even forgot those three words, for his horse leaping over a bridge with him, he said, "Devil take all." I have conversed with many who have much the same notion; they do not know that repentance is a change of heart and life, but think it consists in a few expressions of sorrow, and calling God to pardon



don them for Christ's sake. Gilpin, in his excellent sermon on Christ's promise to the thief on the cross, says, "I have seldom seen sickness draw on a change of life. The sinner has generally returned, after his recovery, to his old habits. All therefore that a minister of the gospel can say is only this, that *God has nowhere promised in the covenant of grace, forgiveness to any repentance, but what is followed by a holy life; and if men are saved, after a course of wickedness, on death-bed repentance, they are not saved according to any known conditions of the gospel.* Gilpin's sermons, vol. ii. page 122. 2d edition.

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Fatally he errs  
 Whose hope fore-runs repentance, and who presumes  
 That God will pardon when he's tir'd of sin,  
 And like a stale companion casts it off.  
 Oh! arrogant, delusive, impious thought,  
 To meditate commodious truce with heaven,  
 When death's swift arrow smites him unprepar'd,  
 And that protracted moment never comes,  
 Or comes too late: Turn then, presumptuous man,  
 Turn to the sinner,——  
 Who died reviling, there behold thy doom.

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

I have also met with many who keep a shorter account with God; they mistake the means for the end. When they can find time to go to church, it is not with any view to obtain grace and strength to enable them to forsake their bad practices; they have not the least inclination to alter their wicked course of life; but think that by going to church and begging pardon, their old score is wiped off: if to going to church they add the reading a chapter or two in the bible, on Sunday, they rest quite satisfied, and suppose their accounts fully balanced.

To reckon any of these people among the believers of the gospel of Christ is an abuse of words. But it is time to conclude this long epistle.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER

## LETTER XV.

Absurd presumption ! Thou who never knewst  
 A serious thought ! shalt thou dream of joy ?  
 No man e'er found a happy life by chance ;  
 Or yawn'd into being with a wish ;  
 Or with the snout of grov'ling appetite,  
 E'er smelt it out, and grubb'd from the dirt.  
 An art it is, and must be learnt, and learnt  
 With unremitting effort, or be lost ;  
 And leave us blockheads in our bliss.  
 Wealth may seek us ; but wisdom must be sought,  
 Sought before all ; but (how unlike all else  
 We seek on earth ! ) 'tis never sought in vain.

DR. YOUNG.

O death, how insupportable's thy pain !—

———— my soul still labours

Beneath uncertainty and anxious doubt,

The mind's worse state.

ROW'S TAMERLANE.

DEAR FRIEND,

I WILL take up again the conversation between me and my friend.

But, Dick, you have not yet answered my question.

“ You asked, if I was not in heart a Christian ? I will answer you sincerely. I think that I am more a Christian in heart than in head. If I do not deceive myself I endeavour to practice the moral duties enjoined by Christ, from a real conviction that they are essential to my present, as well as to my future happiness ; and a spirit of devotion is now become habitual to me. The following lines I have a thousand times repeated, I think with real sincerity :

“ If I am right thy grace impart,

“ Still in the right to stay,

“ If I am wrong, O teach my heart

“ To find the better way.”

“ After all, I confess that I have at times some doubts, which obtrude themselves upon my mind, concerning some points. Young says,

If

If wrong thy heart, thy head is right in vain.

“And many will say, if wrong thy head, thy heart is right in vain ; but I hope that it is not the case with me, as I believe most of those points that are thought to be most important.”

I repeated the following lines from the Night Thoughts :

Life immortal strikes  
Conviction, in a flood of light divine ;  
A Christian dwells like Uriel in the sun,  
Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight ;  
And ardent hope anticipates the skies.

Read and revere the sacred page ; a page  
Where triumphs immortality ; a page  
Which the whole world could not produce,  
Which not the conflagration can destroy ;  
In nature's ruins not one letter lost ;  
'Tis printed in the mind of God for ever.

Admit a God---that Mystery Supreme  
That cause uncaus'd, all other wonders cease ;  
Nothing is marvellous for Him to do ;  
Deny Him---All is mystery besides ;  
Millions of mysteries ! each darker far  
Than that thy wisdom would unwisely shun.  
If weak thy faith, why chuse the harder side ;  
We nothing know but what is marvellous :  
Yet what is marvellous we can't believe.  
So weak our reason, and so great our God,  
What most surprises is the *sacred page*.  
Or full as strange, or stranger must be true,  
Faith is not reason's labour but repose.

As soon as I had done spouting Dick said, that some years since he was by some infidel authors led to disbelieve the immortality of the soul ; but that he could scarcely think it possible for one to continue long in the disbelief of that heart-cheering doctrine, if he would read Young's Night Thoughts with attention. There are excellent passages on that very important subject scattered throughout the whole work ; but the sixth, seventh, and eighth

Nights

Nights contain the substance of what has been advanced both by philosophers and divines on that head, and in general his reasoning is strong and acute; and the poetry is so beautiful, so animating, and so devout, that I can scarce read it a quarter of an hour, without feeling such delightful sensations as though my soul had already escaped from this benighted, doubting state of things, and had entered on a blissful immortality. I have repeated the following lines with the author's feelings:

Believe, and shew the reason of a man ;  
 Believe, and taste the pleasure of a god :  
 Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb.

-----  
 Abhorr'd annihilation ! blasts the soul,  
 And wide extends the bounds of human woe.

Dick continued, It was you who first recommended that book to me, for which I am greatly your debtor ; it has afforded me great pleasure, and I think I may add much profit, so that I can forgive the few faults which are observable in it as scarce worth noticing, amid such infinite varieties of beauties which are to be found in every page. At times, when tempted to doubt of the existence of the Divine Being, I have been forced to join in the pious Doctor's interrogation :

Has the great Sovereign sent ten thousand worlds  
 To tell us he resides above them all,  
 In Glory's unapproachable recess !  
 And dare Earth's bold inhabitants deny  
 The sumptuous, the magnificent embassy  
 A moment's audience !  
 Who sees but is confounded, or convinc'd ?  
 Renounces Reason, or a God adores.

If any of the vices of the age appear more than ordinary tempting, I take up the Night Thoughts ; and words cannot describe how ridiculous, or mean, those vices appear to me.

There's



There's not a day but to the man of thought,  
 Betrays some secret ; that throws new reproach  
 On life, and makes him sick of seeing more.  
 The scenes of business tell us what are men ;  
 The scenes of pleasure what are all beside.  
 The world's all Title-page, there's no contents ;  
 The world's all Face ; the man who shews his heart,  
 Is hooted for his nudities, and scorn'd.

## NIGHT THOUGHTS.

I am seldom lowspirited, or in the vapours ; but  
 if at any time my mind is depressed, I find this  
 divine bard operates upon me like the music of  
 David on the soul, the evil spirits are charmed  
 away ; it says,

To chase thy gloom,—Go fix some weighty truth ;  
 Chain down some passion ; do some generous good ;  
 Correct thy friend ; befriend thy greatest foe ;  
 Or with warm heart, and confidence divine,  
 Spring up, and lay hold on him who made thee.  
 ——— Thy gloom is scattered, spritely spirits flow ;  
 Tho' wither'd is thy vine, and harp unstrung.

Does the fear of death, and too great attachment  
 of life make me uneasy, I take up this companion  
 of mine, and

————— Each sublunary wish  
 Lets go its eager grasp, and drops the world,  
 The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave ;  
 The deep damp vault, the darkness and the worm ;  
 These are the bugbears of a winter's eve,  
 Imagination's fool, and Error's wretch.  
 Man makes a death, which nature never made ;  
 Then on the point of his own fancy falls ;  
 And feels a thousand deaths in fearing one.

## NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Respecting the Night Thoughts, I was quite of  
 my friends opinion, for were I to be restricted to the  
 Bible, and one volume of that size, it should be  
 Young's Night Thoughts, if I had liberty to choose,  
 amongst all the books in the world, as I know not of  
 any four or six volumes of that size, that contain

so much instruction, or would afford to me so much real pleasure.

And however strange it may appear, I assure you, that I sometimes read those divine poems when I was extremely sceptical, and found pleasure in reading them; and even at times felt much of the pious spirit that dictated them. In these moments I have thought that devotion to a Supreme Being was natural to man, as during the period when I even questioned the existence of God, as it were by an involuntary impulse, I often lifted up my heart to him,

“ Whose Temple is all Space,  
Whose Altar, Earth, Sea, Sky !”

Since I had the above conversation with my friend, I read a passage quoted from the works of a freethinking lady, which shews that she was at times in the same state of mind. I have no doubt but that many unhappy unbelievers have often felt the same struggles between truth and error, belief and unbelief; the passage is as follows :

“ When the powerful hand of time imprints on  
“ us the wrinkles of age, blunts the senses, ab-  
“ sorbs the vigour of the mind and body, what  
“ would be able to charm and dispel the grief of  
“ falling into decay?——Remembrance and hope;  
“ the testimonies of a soul without reproach, the  
“ hopes of a future state, are helpful aids to soften  
“ the declivity by which we descend to the grave;  
“ they embellish the road by the attractions of the  
“ prospect, and make us resign ourselves to the  
“ arms of death as quietly as to those of sleep.

“ Amiable hope, why should I refuse to enjoy  
“ thee! In the phlegm of argument, I doubt al-  
“ most of every thing, I absolutely reject several,  
“ but as soon as feeling warms my imagination and  
“ dilates my heart, I wish for a God, for a soul,  
“ for immortality. The desire that I have that they  
“ may

“ may be, persuades me they are ; I feel the force  
 “ of the objections that may be made to the con-  
 “ trary, and I would willingly compare it to that  
 “ gleam of a bright flash of lightning which shews  
 “ the horizon for a moment, only to replunge it all  
 “ at once into the most profound darkness.

“ The habit of speculations, and the indifference  
 “ they inspire, very frequently throw the mind  
 “ again into the soul of doubt ; but the habit of the  
 “ prejudices of intimacy has still more power ; the  
 “ obligation of preserving to outward appearance  
 “ incessantly returns, and renews the deep impres-  
 “ sions which they formerly made. I feel myself  
 “ hurried away towards the general declivity ; it is  
 “ easy to give credit to that which flatters.

“ The idea of an excellent Being completes my  
 “ happiness, I love to think that a beneficent Pro-  
 “ vidence superintends the order of the great ma-  
 “ chine ; I hope to have him for my perpetual wit-  
 “ ness ; I love to believe that he interests himself  
 “ about human nature, and wills all the good that I  
 “ desire. Firm in my conduct, uncertainty often  
 “ agitates my mind ; then, without bearing up  
 “ against it, tranquilized by my intentions, I follow  
 “ it till something fixes me. It is the flexible reed,  
 “ which yielding to the effects of the winds dreads  
 “ not their impetuous blasts.”

Daniel in his Arcadia says,

---

I see how doubt  
 Comes in far easier than it can get out.

I think, my friend, you will join in the follow-  
 ing poetical prayer ; I think it is from the Latin of  
 Boetius.

O thou whose pow'r o'er moving worlds presides,  
 Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,  
 On darkling man, in pure effulgence shine,  
 And clear the clouded mind with light divine,  
 'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast  
 With silent confidence and holy rest ;

From

From thee, Great God, we spring, to thee we tend,  
Path, Motive, Guide, Original and End.

The famous Athenian tragic poet had, more than two thousand years since, the same impression on his mind.

O thou that sits supreme above,  
Whatever name thou deign'st to bear,  
Unblam'd may I pronounce thee Jove !  
Immur'd in deep and holy thought,  
If rightly I conjecture aught  
Thy pow'r I most revere ;  
Else vainly tost, the anxious mind,  
Nor truth nor calm repose can find.

I will conclude this with a few lines from Horace, they are expressive of my late state ; also of my present determination.

A fugitive from heaven and pray'r,  
I mock'd at all religious fear,  
Deep scienc'd in the mazy lore  
Of mad philosophy ; but now  
Hoist sail, and back my voyage plow  
To that blest harbour, which I left before.

FRANCIS.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER



## LETTER XVI.

Men drop so fast, ere life's mid stage we tread,  
 Few know so many friends alive as dead.  
 How oft the moon, how oft the midnight bell,  
 That iron tongue of death ! with solemn knell,  
 On folly's errands, as we vainly roam,  
 Knocks at our hearts and finds our thoughts from home.

LOVE OF FAME.

Deep in the secret he looks thro' the whole,  
 And pities the dull rogue that saves his soul ;  
 To talk with rev'rence you must take good heed,  
 Nor shock his tender reason with the creed ;  
 Howe'er well bred in public he complies,  
 Obliging friends alone with blasphemies.

\* \* \* \* \*

Who makes so merry with his creed  
 He almost thinks he disbelieves indeed ;  
 But only thinks so, to give both their due,  
 Satan and he believe and tremble too.

LOVE OF FAME.

The Love of life too flies among the rest,  
 The last that lingers in the human breast.

LEWIS'S STATIUS.

DEAR FRIEND,

DURING my visit to my old friend  
 Dick Thrifty, I observed him one morning much  
 affected. He had been reading a letter which he  
 put into my hands repeating these lines.

—— “ Friends our chief treasure ! how they drop !

—— “ Philander gone !

“ How the world falls to pieces round us !

“ And leaves us in a ruin of our joy !”

Dick had received this letter two years before,  
 but he could never look over it without being affected. It informed him of the death of our old friend  
 Jack Jolly, and Dick wanted me to look at a certain  
 part of it. We had both a very great regard for  
 him.

“ How

"How often we talk'd down the summer's sun,  
 "And cool'd our passions by the breezy stream ;  
 "How often thaw'd and shorten'd winter's eve,  
 "By conflict kind, and struck out latent truth."

Dick and I put our knowledge of him together, and I will give you the sum of what we know concerning him. Jack Jolly was the son of a poor countryman in the North of England, who had contrived to have all his six or eight sons taught to read, write, and cast accounts. Jack and several of his brothers came to London when boys. He was bound an apprentice to a trade ; during his apprenticeship he acquired a taste for reading. At first he purchased penny pamphlets at ballad stalls : these productions he read with great attention. As soon as his little leather-purse would admit of it, he bought sixpenny extracts from old romances, such as the history of Jane Shore, and Fair Rosamond, the Seven Champions, the Destruction of Troy, The delightful History of Montillion, Done Ballance of Greece, and others of the same class. For several years his leisure hours were dedicated to this kind of reading.

One day as Jack was examining the contents of a stall, he met with a play, which he purchased for a few halfpence. This play highly delighted him, and for sometime most of the contents of his small purse was laid out in plays ; those plays he read at all opportunities for a year or two. After this he acquired a taste for our old English poets ; Chaucer, Spencer, &c. he eagerly devoured. Some of our best modern poets were soon added to his small library, which he kept in a box.

I well remember,---He was one who own'd  
 No common soul. In youth he genius nurs'd.

WORDSWORTH.

I believe Jack was scarce out of his apprenticeship, when the old romances and poets were neglected.

lected. Jack had occasionally dropped in to hear some Calvinistic-Methodist Preachers, and was made a convert. So that for several years Jack's time was employed in reading the works of Calvin, Boston, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Dr. Crisp, Charnock, T. Goodwin, Witsius, Flavel, Whitfield, Toplady, Romaine, and various others of the same tendency.

The following lines might have been applied to Jack :

Every sentence that he says  
 Digested into scripture phrase,  
 Final perseverance, reprobation,  
 Election, and predestination,  
 Are the points on which he descants  
 When mix'd among his brother saints,  
 In which mysterious discourses,  
 He musters all his scripture forces.

I believe Jack was about 26 years old when a violent dispute arose between the people among whom Jack had enrolled his name :

“ Each does the other's argument deride ;  
 “ Each has the church and scripture on his side ;  
 “ Oppose each other out of Christian zeal,  
 “ Shewing how well they could dispute and rail.”

Various pamphlets were wrote on both sides, which only made the breach wider. „

—— “ Civil dudgeon then grew high,  
 “ They all fell out they scarce knew why ;  
 —— “ Hard words, jealousies and fears,  
 “ Set altogether by the ears.”

In the end, the congregation divided into two parts and separated, and each party chose a pastor for themselves.

Religion should enxtinguish strife,  
 And make a calm of human life.  
 But even those who differ

Only on topics left at large,  
How fiercely will they meet the charge !  
No combatants are stiffer. COWPER.

Our friend Jack Jolly having begun to read controversy, proceeded so far in that kind of study, that in a short time he took leave of both congregations, and soon after of Christianity also. Poor Jack sunk into one degree of infidelity after another, until he became a downright atheist. Jack had a brother of the same religious turn of mind, who soon followed Jack into infidelity, and I believe was for sometime also an atheist. Their way of life afterward, and the miseries which they brought upon themselves, by destroying the constitutions, and their premature deaths, I have already taken notice of in a former letter.

I have also informed you, that my friend Dick and myself got acquainted with some freethinkers, who pointed out some freethinking authors for us to read. Poor Jack Jolly and his brother were two of them. And although Jack was very instrumental in leading us into infidelity, yet we have ever retained a very great friendship for him. We were also the more affected by his death, as we could never learn that he was convinced of his error before he died.

Although Jack's opinions underwent various revolutions, yet he did not long neglect to improve his intellectual powers.

He, very early in life, married one of the pious young women belonging to the religious community to which he first joined himself : she made him a very excellent wife ; and notwithstanding his infidelity to her, she was not only patient under it, but very kind, and exceedingly attentive to all his wants and wishes, and for many years nursed him in a most affectionate manner. But soon after they were married he committed to her the chief care of his shop ; the profits of his business enabled him to purchase



purchase books, and he had leisure to read them : he had strong natural parts and a tenacious memory, and he soon became acquainted with the best books in the English language, in various branches of literature. His library contained the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Cowley, Waller, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Gay, Young, Thomson, Prior, Addison, Swift, Halley, Hoole, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, Southcombe, Beaumont and Fletcher ; Lee, Vanbrough, Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Locke, Reid, Beattie, Kaimes, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Buffon, Smellie, Smollet, Fielding, Le Sage, Cervantis, Chesterfield, Shaftesbury, Helvetius, Horace, Lucretius, Virgil, Homer, Cicero, Seneca, Thucydides, Smith, Blair, and Guthrie : he had also Dodsley's old plays, other collections of old plays, old romances, reviews, and various other books. With these works he was so well acquainted as to be able to turn to such passages as he occasionally wanted, and would frequently quote verbatim from memory. In short, he made such a progress in literary knowledge, that he was looked to as an oracle in the small circles of his acquaintance, which flattered his vanity, and perhaps made him affect singularity, as I sometimes thought that, like Milton's devil, he would sooner rule in hell, than serve in heaven. This also drew him much into company, particularly convivial parties, where he in general spent the largest portion of the night. He was sure to be the last that quitted the tavern, as he would not stir while he could get one to keep him company. In returning home, he would often go a great way about in hopes of finding another public-house open, as he never liked to go to bed until daylight began to appear ; and when taverns of good repute were all shut up, he had not the least objection to enter such as could be found open. In those houses, his excellent wife, who always sat up for him, was forgot.

The sacred laws of well-plac'd love,  
 Luxuriously indulge it,  
 But never tempt the *illicit rove*,  
 Though nothing should divulge it ;  
 I wave the quantum of the sin ;  
 The hazard of concealing ;  
 But Oh, it hardens all within,  
 And petrifies the feeling.

BURNS.

For about four years, my friend Dick and I kept his company a great deal ; for sometime we were led to follow him home from our midnight rambles, for fear some harm should befall him ; but on finding him so often in the same state of intoxication, or nearly so, and also finding that he in reality did not like to go to bed until it was time for others to get up, we sometimes thought that he might be terrified in the night, and not able to take his rest ; we cannot absolutely say that it was so. It is certain, that even when sober he never wished to go to bed until morning: for if he went home he would sit up reading.

Jack had some excellent qualities. His honesty and integrity were incorruptible, he was also generous and humane, and free from all selfish views and designs ; a very affectionate father to his children, and his conduct to his wife when at home was very kind. Neither of us recollect ever to have seen him in a passion, or in an ill humour. We have given you his good and bad qualities, as Horace directs. He says,

We have all our vices, and the best  
 Is he, who with fewest is oppress,  
 A kinder friend, who balances my good  
 And bad together, as in truth he should,  
 If haply my good qualities prevail,  
 Inclines indulgence, let his errors plead  
 His merits, be with equal measure weigh'd ;  
 For he who hopes his life shall not offend,  
 Should overlook the pimples of his friend,  
 And ev'n injustice to his own defects,  
 At best should grant the pardon he expects.

My

My friend Dick and I did this, and had such a regard for him, that we could have divided our incomes with him. And I have reason to think that he had a great regard for us.

A friend is worth all hazard we can run.  
 Poor is the friendless master of a world ;  
 A world in purchase of a friend is gain.  
 Hast thou no friend to set thy mind abroad ?  
 Good sense will stagnate. Thoughts shut up, want air,  
 And spoil like bales unopen'd to the sun.  
 Thoughts too, deliver'd are more possess'd ;  
 Teaching, we learn ; and giving we retain  
 The births of intellect ; when dumb forgot ;  
 Speech burnishes our mental magazine ;  
 Brightens for ornament, and whets for use.

Celestial *Happiness*, whene'er she stoops  
 To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds  
 And one alone, to make her sweet amends  
 For absent heaven—the bosom of a friend ;  
 Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft,  
 Each other's pillow to repose divine.

## NIGHT THOUGHTS.

On this pleasing subject I know you will be glad to see the following lines of a pious poet.

True Friendship has in short a grace  
 More than terrestrial in its face,  
 That proves it heaven-descended.  
 Man's love of woman not so pure,  
 Nor when sincere, so secure,  
 To last till life is ended.

As similarity of mind,  
 Or something not to be defin'd,  
 First rivets our attention ;  
 So manners decent and polite,  
 The same we practis'd at first sight,  
 Must save it from declension.

COWPER.

Jack appeared not to have the least desire to grow rich, a miserly disposition was his aversion. He did not even sufficiently provide for his wife and children before he retired from business, two thousand

and pounds being the utmost that he had realized when, about eight years since, he left London and settled in a country town, where he was rather straitened in his circumstances, owing to fresh taxes, and the great rise of the necessaries of life ; but he had such high notions of independency, that he would not accept of any assistance from his friends, even though offered in the most delicate manner.

After having informed you in a former letter, that Jack Jolly did not believe in a Supreme Being ; or rather that, at times, he endeavoured to disprove the existence of a first cause, asserting that there was but one eternal substance, namely matter ; you will easily suppose that he did not believe in the doctrine of the immateriality and immortality of the soul. Whenever he spoke on those heads it was only among his particular friends, who, by the bye, were for some little time nearly of his opinion, and then all his arguments tended to disprove that comfortable and animating doctrine ; nor would he admit that the thoughts of annihilation were shocking to human nature. He thought our favourite poet *raved* when he penned the following lines.

Abhorr'd annihilation ! blasts the soul,  
And wide extends the bounds of human woe !  
Fall, how profound ! like Lucifer's !—  
From whence fond hope built her pavilion high,  
The gods among ; hurl'd headlong, hurl'd at once  
To night ! to nothing ! darker still than night.

The ensuing verses pleased him much.

---

“ Death, a quick relief,  
“ To all thy vain imaginary grief !  
“ For thou shalt sleep and never wake again ;  
“ And quitting life, shalt quit thy living pain ;  
“ The worst that can befall thee measur'd right,  
“ Is a sound sleep and a long good night.

Jack would, at times, argue in favour of suicide, and say,

“ The



---

" The wretch  
 " That's weary of the world and tir'd of life  
 " May give each inquietude the slip,  
 " By stealing out of being when he pleased,  
 " And by what way, whether by hemp or steel;  
 " Death's thousand doors stand open. Who should force  
 " The ill-pleas'd guest to sit out his full time,  
 " Or blame him if he goes! Sure he does well,  
 " That helps himself as timely as he can."

I think Virgil is made to say in English,

The gates of hell are open night and day,  
 Smooth the descent, and easy is the way.

Notwithstanding his attempts to disprove the being of a God, the immortality of the soul, a future state, &c. and his endeavours to justify suicide; yet poor Jack chose to bear a miserable existence for many years, rather than

" Take the wide leap to that dark, dreadful shore,  
 " Whence none come back to tell us what they find."

Although he bore patiently various long, lingering, and, at times, painful disorders; yet as he did not put in practice what he attempted to justify, but rather chose to live in great misery, I cannot help thinking that he doubted the truth of his own principles before I left London, after which I never saw him. In the letters which I afterwards received from him, he was silent as to his sentiments; but his living so long in misery shewed,

---

" His soul convulsed,  
 " Trembled in anxious doubt, and shuddering stood,  
 " Afraid to leap into the op'ning gulf  
 " Of future state; 'till the banks of clay  
 " Fell from beneath his feet; in vain he grasp'd  
 " The shatter'd reeds, that cheat his easy wish."

I am,  
 Dear Friend,  
 Your's.

## LETTER XVII.

To *be* or not to *be*, that is the question.

SHAKESPEARE.

Nature's first wish is endless happiness.

*Annihilation* is an after thought.

——— What depth of horror lies enclos'd !

DR. YOUNG.

To *be*, is better than not to *be*,

Else nature cheated us in our formation.

And we *are*, the sweet delusion wears

Such various charms and prospects of delight,

That what we cou'd not will, we make our choice,

Desirous to prolong the life she gave.

Madmen and fools may hurry o'er the scene,

The wise man walks an easy sober pace,

And tho' he sees one precipice for all,

Declines the fatal brink of looking back

On what he leaves, and thinks on where he falls.

SEWELL'S SIR W. RALEIGH.

" Consider man as *mortal*, all is dark,

" And wretched ; *Reason* weeps at the survey."

DEAR FRIEND,

WHILE Dick and I were conversing after dinner on the important subjects mentioned in the last chapter, we were astonished at the declaration of a lady in company, who seriously and deliberately assured us, that she had often wished her soul was mortal, that it might die with the body ; that the idea of annihilation was so far from being frightful to her, that it would afford her very great satisfaction, if she could but be sure that when she had paid the debt of nature, she should no longer have any kind of conscious existence, as she thought it was now

——— " A serious thing to die ! My soul !

" What a strange moment must it be, when near

" Thy journey's end thou hast the gulf in view !

" That

"That awful gulf no mortal e'er repass'd  
 "To tell what's doing on the other side!

But if she was but sure of being annihilated,

"If death was nothing, and naught after death;  
 "If, when men died, at once they ceas'd to be,  
 "Returning to the barren womb of nothing  
 "Whence they sprung:"

It would take a weight off her spirits that sometimes oppressed her much.

With prospects of futurity distracted,  
 Long since have I consum'd my days in grief.

ORESTES.

By this time I suppose you conclude, that we had in company one of those ladies who are flying from London to Bath, from Bath to Tunbridge, from thence to Buxton, &c. in a fruitless pursuit of happiness, or rather to avoid reflection; or you think that she has passed her bloom at the gambling table, midnight masquerades, &c. or that she is one of those described by Pope:

Now deep in Taylor, and the Book of Martyrs,  
 Now drinking Citron with his Grace and Chartres;  
 Now conscience chills her, and now passion burns,  
 And Atheism and Religion take their turns;  
 A very heathen in her carnal part,  
 Yet still a sad good Christian at her heart.

No, my friend, she is a very different character. Why then, you will say, "She must be a poor inoping creature, who will not take God's word and promise of forgiveness to truly repenting sinners, until she can feel rapturous sensations of his love and mercy. Or, perhaps, she is one who is afraid that the gracious and merciful God of love has, from all eternity decreed her damnation, the thoughts of which have drove her into a state of desperation."

You are still mistaken. I am well informed, that the lady is very amiable. She is about forty. During thirty years which she lived with her father, she was a very dutiful daughter; the ten that she has been a wife, she ever has been, and still is,

“Blest with temper, whose unclouded ray  
 “Can make to-morrow, cheerful as to-day;  
 “She never answers ’till her husband cools,  
 “And if she rules him, never shews she rules.  
 “Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,  
 “Yet has her humour most when she obeys.”

Her life has been a life of innocence; the continued ill treatment which she for years received from some of her relations, could never put her out of temper, or cause her to utter an ill-natured word; or to be guilty of an unkind action. She possesses an uncommonly sympathizing, feeling heart, is very kind and charitable to the poor. Denham says,

The sweetest cordial we receive at last  
 Is conscience of our virtuous actions past.

That so charming and virtuous a lady as this should wish that existence might terminate with this short life, is, I believe, not a common circumstance. On our expressing our surprise, and requesting to be made acquainted with her reasons for so unnatural a wish, she said, that “she was not satisfied with herself, she thought her disposition was not so piously disposed as she found the Almighty required; she had no desire to go to church, and when she was there she was not as devout as she should be. She seldom prayed much in private. She did not know that she had ever done or said any thing wrong. But then she was ignorant of divine things, and felt an indifference towards them; and having doubts on her mind, rather than run the hazard of being eternally miserable, she had  
 many



many times wished to be annihilated." She said, these melancholy thoughts were not lasting, she was in general happy. Mrs. Rowe thus describes a state of mind nearly similar.

— Starts at the awful prospect of the deep,  
Still fears to explore the dark and unknown way,  
Still backward shrinks and meditates delay;  
Spins out the time, and lingers in debate,  
Displeas'd to try an unexperienc'd state.

*If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?* And if so virtuous a woman as this has very uneasy thoughts, as to her acceptance with God, what must, or rather, what ought the generality of our fashionable ladies to feel?

Dick took up his favourite book the *Night Thoughts*, and read to her the following lines:

O thou great Arbiter of life and death!  
Nature's immortal immaterial sun!  
Whose all prolific beam late call'd me forth  
From darkness, teeming darkness, where I lay  
The worm's inferior, and, in Rank, beneath  
The dust I tread on, high to bear my Brow,  
To drink the spirit of the golden Day,  
And triumph in existence; and couldst know  
No Motive, but my Bliss! and hast ordain'd  
A rise in blessing! with the *Patriarch's* joy.  
Thy call, I follow to the land *unknown*;  
I trust in thee, and know in whom I trust;  
Or life, or death, is equal; neither weighs:  
All weighs in this---O let me live to thee.

"This Madam (continued Dick), is the only disposition that can possibly make us happy: the good Doctor appears to have had that faith and trust in God, which every real Christian should have. In another place he says,

If, sick of folly I relent; Christ writes  
My name in heav'n, with that inverted spear  
(A spear deep dipt in blood!) which pierc'd his side,  
F6. And

And open'd there a font for all Mankind,  
 Who strive to combat crimes, to drink and live :  
*This, only this, subdues the Fear of Death.*

The parents of this lady I find are called good kind of people ; when they have no company at home, they go to church once of a Sunday ; are kind, obliging neighbours, good to the poor, &c. But it does not appear that they consider themselves possessed of an immortal part ; which must be happy or miserable to all eternity.

They have, it seems, a Bible in their house, carefully locked up. For the first ten years after they were married, this bible was brought down stairs once in a year, or once in two years at farthest, to insert in the blank leaf the names of their children, together with the year, day, and hour of the day, in which each of the little strangers made its first appearance. After the children were grown old enough to dispute about their age, the bible was several times produced to settle these disputes ; but after some of the girls had reached their twenty-fourth year without being married, the bible was taken more care of than ever ; as the eldest daughters were always ready to settle the ages of the younger part of the family, to save them the trouble of looking into the said blank leave.

Perhaps the lady's parents have seen the following satirical lines, and are determined to have their children the very reverse, as not one of them appears to know one sentence in the sacred volume except such as treats of marriages.

But Oh ! the nymph that mounts above the skies,  
 And gratis clears religious mysteries,  
 Resolv'd the Church's welfare to ensure,  
 And make her family a *Sinecure* ;  
 The theme divine at *cards* she'll not forget,  
 But takes in texts of scripture at *picquet* ;  
 In those licentious meetings, acts the *prude*,  
 And thanks her Maker that her *cards* are good.

LOVE OF FAME.

Although

Although one cannot help remarking with concern, that some of those who are acquainted with the theory of religion, and who, to show their knowledge, or for worse purposes, introduce it unseasonably, are yet known to be more relax in the performance of the duties it enjoins, than some that say little, and know less; yet, surely, such who in the higher walks of life totally neglect that important subject, and bring up their children in gross ignorance of religion, must certainly be blameable in a very high degree. *My people* (saith God) *perish for want of knowledge*. It is really astonishing that mankind should employ so much of their time in acquiring the knowledge of the most trifling things; and yet, contentedly, remain in ignorance of the Christian Religion, which tends so much to enlarge the powers of the human mind; and is the only basis of *happiness* here, and *hereafter*.

I remember reading, thirty years since, in old Pemble's Treatise of Grace, in folio, an account of an old man, who, on his death-bed, was asked by the minister, What he thought God was? He replied, "A fine old man." What do you think Jesus Christ is? "A hopeful youth," was the reply. What do you think your soul is? "A great bone in my back," was the answer.

I am sorry to say, that this excellent lady's knowledge in divine subjects but little exceeds that of Pemble's poor old man; but in sincerity and openness of heart, I never saw one that exceeded her.

---

She to the world,  
Went forth, pure in heart, against the taint  
Of dissolute tongues. WORDSWORTH.

I am,  
Dear Friend,  
Your's.

LETTER

## LETTER XVIII.

————— The happy place  
Imparts to thee no happiness, no joy,  
Rather inflames thy torment,  
Never more in Hell than when in Heav'n.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Hell of Heaven.

PARADISE LOST.

Or pain or pleasure, all that lies beyond  
In the unknown abyss is dark as death.

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

Abash'd, asham'd, I cry, Eternal Pow'r !  
I yield; I wait resign'd th' appointed hour.

BROOME.

DEAR FRIEND,

IN October, 1798, S. P. Peach, Esq. being Major of the Tockington Volunteers, gave an entertainment to his corps, and others of his neighbours, in honour of Lord Nelson's glorious victory. This was done on the lawn before his house. The good cheer, the company, music, songs, bonfire, fireworks, &c. had a wonderful effect on the poor countrymen; one of them, in raptures, exclaimed, (by my side,) "This is heaven upon earth!" Upon which another of our volunteers very sincerely and earnestly declared, that "he did not think that heaven was half so fine a place." This had not the least appearance of levity; but was an honest effusion of the heart.

I will give you another anecdote of a similar kind.

A neighbouring clergyman was sent for to pray with a farmer's wife, on the Marsh-Common, about five miles from my house. He, in order to reconcile her to her dying situation, and to send her quietly away, held forth on the happiness which all good people enjoy after death at the right hand of God;



God; during which she shewed signs of impatience. The divine still kept on, and enlarged on the glory, splendor, &c. of heaven, until her patience being quite tired out, she exclaimed, "Don't tell me a long tale about the glory of Heaven; Old England, and the Marsh-Common for me."

"Poor man here buries all his thoughts,  
 "Inters celestial hopes without a sigh!"

Were it only a few poor ploughmen, and a Marsh-Common farmer's wife, that had such low thoughts of the happiness of a future state, one should not be so much surprised; but is there not reason to think that there are thousands who have no better opinion of heavenly pleasure than these poor untaught creatures that have acquired but few ideas above the hogs they feed, or the beasts they drive. The Lady that was introduced to you in my last letter freely confessed herself to be of that number. She informed us, that except now and then, when the thought of death, and the

—— "Anxious casting up of what might be,  
 "Alarm'd her peaceful bosom,"

and made her gloomy, she had always been happy through life; that she would rather live here for ever than go to heaven; that she had not conceived very favourable ideas of the happiness there to be enjoyed; and as she had no knowledge of, or relish for divine things, she did not see how she could comfortably spend an eternity in a place where nothing else was going forward. I fear this lady has, in giving us her own thoughts, given us the thoughts of thousands; and I think she reasoned well. There cannot be the least doubt that the reason why many wish to go to heaven, is not from any love they have for God or heaven; but as they know that there are but two places, they wish to go there to avoid hell. How many are there that think the sabbath.

sabbath a very tiresome day, because they have no relish for religious duties; nay, how many of those who go to church not only do not find any pleasure there, but are glad when the service is over? What enjoyment then can such expect in heaven? I well remember that both I and my companions formerly used to laugh at the thoughts of going to heaven; and were so profane as to say that we should not like for ever to sit on a cloud and sing allelujah; and I fear we spoke the real sentiments of many more. Before any one can properly wish for heaven, or enjoy it hereafter, he must repent, and pray until God gives him a clean heart, and renews a right spirit within him. *Old things must be done away, all things must become new.* And then he will be meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light.

Were it possible for a vicious man to get to heaven with his vicious inclinations and dispositions about him, would he not have the sentiments ascribed to Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost?

---

With what eyes could we  
Stand in his presence humble, and receive  
Strict laws impos'd, to celebrate his throne:  
With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead sing  
Forc'd hallelujahs? This must be our task  
In Heaven, this our delight; how wearisome  
Eternity so spent in worship paid.  
To whom we hate!

But to return. When the lady had expressed her mean ideas of the joys of heaven, Dick began to spout away.

Thy nature immortality! who knows!  
And yet who knows it not? It is but life  
In stronger thread and brighter colours spun,  
And spun for ever.—

---

How great  
To mingle int'rests, converse, amities,  
With all the sons of reason scattered wide  
Thro' habitable space, wherever born,

Howe'er

Howe'er endow'd ! To live free citizens  
 Of universal nature ; to lay hold  
 By more than feeble *faith* on the Supreme :  
 To call heav'n's unfathomable mines  
 Our own ! To rise in science as in bliss,  
 Initiate in the secrets of the skies !  
 To read creation ; in its mighty plan ;  
 In the bare bosom of the Deity !  
 To see before each glance of piercing thought,  
 All cloud, all shadows, blown remote ; and have  
 No mystery---but that of love divine---  
 From darkness, and from dust, to such a scene !  
 Love's element ; true joy's illustrious home !  
 From earth's sad contrast (now deplor'd) more fair !  
 What exquisite vicissitude of fate !  
 Blest absolution of our blackest hour !  
 ----- These are thoughts that make man, man,  
 The wise illumine ; aggrandise the great.

DR. YOUNG.

How, Madam, do you like such a heaven as this ?  
 " O the description is delightful, charming, I could  
 have no objection to such a heaven to-morrow ;"  
 and she acknowledged that she saw nothing roman-  
 tic in the poet's glowing description. She believed  
 that had she given the subject a proper considera-  
 tion, she must have had more favourable ideas of the  
 happiness promised to those that fear God and keep  
 his commandments.

I repeated the following lines of Horace :

Dost hear ? or sporting in my brain  
 What wildly-sweet delirium reign !  
 Lo ! 'mid Elysium's balmy groves,  
 Each happy shade transported roves !  
 I see the living scene display'd,  
 Where rills and breath-gales sigh murmuring through the  
 shades,

FRANCIS.

She liked the Christian's heaven best, and, smil-  
 ing, said, that as we seemed to be acquainted with  
 the country, she should be glad if we would give  
 her some further account of it. We quoted the  
 following passages.

What

What a poor value do men set on heaven?  
 Heav'n the perfection of all that can  
 Be said, or thought, of riches, delight, or harmony,  
 Health, beauty; and all those not subject to  
 The waste of time; but in their height eternal.

SHIRLEY'S ST. PATRICK.

O azure vaults! O crystal sky!  
 The world's transparent canopy!  
 Where joy in full perfection flows,  
 No interruption, no cessation knows,  
 Out in a mighty circle round for ever goes.

ROSCOMMON.

————— There is a heaven:  
 This shred of life cannot be all the web  
 Nature hath wrought to govern divine spirits:  
 There is a heaven, because there is misery.  
 The divine power, ever blest and good,  
 Made not the world for an ill-natured jest,  
 'To sport himself in pains of those he made.

CROWN'S REGULUS.

When ev'ry sinking star shall feel decay,  
 And earth, and sea, and skies, shall pass away;  
 To pay the pangs of parting, fate ordains  
 A blissful meeting on the heav'nly plains;  
 To join in friendship, and unite in joy,  
 Which absence cannot part, nor death destroy.

MRS. ROWE.

Heaven is a great way off, and I shall be  
 Ten thousand years in travel; 'twere happy  
 If I may find a lodging there at last,  
 Though my poor soul get thither upon crutches.

SHIRLEY'S DUKE'S M.

Look up my soul, pant toward th' eternal hills:  
 Those heav'ns are fairer than they seem;  
 There pleasures all sincere glide on crystal rills;  
 There not a drag of guilt defiles,  
 Nor grief disturbs the stream!  
 That Canaan knows no noxious thing,  
 No curs'd soil, no tainted spring,  
 Nor roses grow on thorns, nor honey wears a sting.

DR. WATT'S LYRIC POEMS.

To be good is to be happy: Angels  
 Are happier than men, because they are better.

Guilt



Guilt is the source of sorrow ; 'tis the fiend,  
 Th' avenging fiend, that follows us behind  
 With whips and stings. 'The bless'd know none of this,  
 But rest in everlasting peace of mind.  
 And find the height of all their heav'n in goodness.

ROW'S FAIR PENITENT.

This life's a Dream, an empty show ;  
 But the bright world to which we go,  
 Has joys substantial and sincere ;  
 When shall I wake and find me there.

O glorious hour ! O blest abode !  
 I shall be near and like my God !  
 And flesh and sin no more controul  
 The sacred pleasures of the soul.

DR. WATTS'S PSALMS.

Above the subtle foldings of the sky,  
 Above the well-set orbs soft harmony,  
 Above those petty lamps that gild the night,  
 There is a place o'erflown with hallow'd light ;  
 Where heav'n as if it left itself behind,  
 Or stretch'd out far, not its own bounds confin'd ;  
 Here peaceful flames swell up the sacred place ;  
 Nor can the glory contain itself within the endless space.  
 For there no twilight of the sun's dull ray  
 Glimmers upon the pure and native day :  
 No pale-fac'd moon does in stolen beams appear ;  
 Or with dim taper scatter darkness there :  
 On no smooth sphere the restless seasons slide,  
 Nor circling motion does swift time divide ;  
 Nothing is there to come, and nothing past,  
 But an eternal now does ever last.

COWLEY.

— The soul, stript of mortal clay,  
 Grows all divinely fair ;  
 And boundless roves the milky way,  
 And views the prospects there.

R. SAVAGE.

I knew a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth ;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful, (or possible) for man to utter.

ST. PAUL.

— The soul that leaves this mortal land,  
 Fearless when the Great Master gives command.  
 Death is the storm : she smiles to hear it roar,  
 And bids the tempest waft him from the shore :

Then

Then with a skilful helm she sweeps the seas,  
 And manages the raging storm with ease;  
*(Her face can govern death,)* she spreads her wings  
 Wide to the wind, and as she sails she sings,  
 And loses by degrees the sight of mortal things.  
 As the shores lessen so her joys arise,  
 The waves roll gentler, and the tempest dies,  
 Now vast eternity fills all her sight,  
 She floats on the broad deep with infinite delight,  
 The seas for ever calm, the skies for ever bright.

DR. WATTS'S LYRIC POEMS.

If there's a Power above us,  
 He must delight in virtue, and that  
 Which he delights in must be happy.

ADDISON'S CANTO.

————— What is death, that I should fear it?  
 To die! why 'tis to triumph; 'tis to join  
 The great assembly of the good and just;  
 Immortal worthies, heroes, prophets, saints!  
 Oh, 'tis to join the band of holy men  
 Made perfect by their sufferings! 'Tis to meet  
 My great progenitors; they, with whom the Lord  
 Design'd to hold familiar converse! 'Tis to see  
 Bless'd Noah and his children, once a world!  
 'Tis to behold, Oh, rapture to conceive!  
 Those we have known, and lov'd, and lost below!  
 To join the blest hosannas to their King!  
 Whose face to see, whose glory to behold,  
 Alone were heav'n, tho' saint or seraph none  
 Should meet our sight, and only God were there!  
 This is to die! who would not die for this?  
 Who would not die that we may live for ever?

MRS. H. MORE.

I give you, said Dick, another old heathen's  
 description of the heaven he expected to go to; you  
 will find it in Cicero, on Old Age, as translated. I  
 wish all that are called Christians had so much  
 faith, and such sensible notions of heaven, as this  
 poor heathen had, before light and immortality were  
 brought to light by the gospel.

The foolish and short-sighted die with fear,  
 That they go nowhere, or they know not where.

The

The wise and virtuous soul, with clearer eyes,  
 Before she parts some happy port describes.  
 My friends your fathers I shall surely see ;  
 Nor only those I lov'd, or who lov'd me ;  
 But such as before ours did end their days ;  
 Of whom we hear, and read, and write their praise.  
 This I believe ; for were I on my way,  
 None should persuade me to return or stay ;  
 Should some god tell me, that I should be born,  
 And cry again, his offer I would scorn ;  
 Asham'd when I had ended well my race,  
 To be led back to the first starting place. —  
 And since with me more griev'd than joy'd,  
 We should be either satisfy'd or cloy'd.

Happy when I, from this turmoil set free,  
 That peaceful and divine assembly see :  
 Not only those I nam'd I there shall greet,  
 But my own gallant, virtuous Cato meet.  
 Nor did I weep, when I to ashes turn'd  
 His belov'd body, who should mine have burn'd.  
 I, in my thoughts, beheld his soul ascend :  
 Where his first hopes our interview attend.  
 Then cease to wonder that I feel no grief  
 From age, which is of my delights the chief.  
 My hopes, if this assurance hath deceiv'd,  
 (That I man's soul immortal hath believ'd,)  
 And if I err, no power shall dispossess  
 My thoughts of that expected happiness.

DENHAM.

Where am I now? Angels and God is here ;  
 An unexhausted *ocean of delight*  
 Swallows my senses quite,  
 And drowns all what, or how, or where,  
 Not Paul, who first did thither pass ;  
 And this great world's Columbus was,  
 The *tyrannus pleasure* could express.  
 Oh, 'tis too much for man ! but let it ne'er be less.

COWLEY.

— A glorious world,  
 — What a world, an *Eden*, heighten'd all !  
 It is another scene ! another self !  
 And still another, as time rolls along ;  
 And that a *self* far more illustrious still,  
 Beyond long ages, yet roll'd up in shades,

Unpierc'd

Unpierc'd by bold conjecture's keenest ray;  
 What evolutions of surprising fate!  
 How nature opens and revives my soul  
 In boundless walks of raptur'd thought, where gods  
 Encounter and embrace me! What new births  
 Of strange adventure, foreign to the sun,  
 Where what now charms, perhaps whate'er exists,  
 Old Time, and fair *creation* are no more!

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

---

Far distant he descries  
 Ascending by degrees magnificent,  
 Up to the walls of heav'n, a structure high;  
 At top whereof, but far more rich appear'd  
 The work as of a kingly palace gate,  
 With frontispiece of diamond and gold  
 Embellish'd; thick with sparkling orient gems  
 The portal shone, inimitable on earth  
 By model, or by shading pencil drawn;  
 The stars were such, as whereon Jacob saw  
 Angels ascending and descending, bands  
 Of guardians bright, when he from Esau fled  
 To Padan-Aran in the field of Luz,  
 Dreaming by night under the open sky,  
 And waking cry'd, This is the gate of heav'n.

---

The multitude of angels, with a shout  
 (Loud, as from numbers without numbers; sweet,  
 As from blest voices) utt'ring joy, heaven rung  
 With jubilee, and loud hosannas fill'd  
 Th' eternal regions. Lowly reverent  
 Tow'rd's either throne they bow, and to the ground,  
 With solemn adoration, down they cast  
 Their crowns, inwove with amarant and gold—  
 Now in loose garlands thick thrown off; the bright  
 Pavement, that like a sea of jasper shone,  
 Impurpled celestial roses smil'd.  
 Then crown'd again, their golden harps they took;  
 Harps ever tun'd, that glittering by their side  
 Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet  
 Of charming symphony, they introduce  
 Their sacred song, and waken raptures high,  
 No voice exempt; no voice but well could join  
 Melodious part, such concord is in heav'n.

MILTON.

Exulting here the final *buge* giv'n,  
 Enter thou faithful servant to my heav'n.  
 Glory, which here through faith may well believe,



No speech can utter, and no thought conceive :  
 When weary time his utmost race has run,  
 Glory through endless ages but begun,  
 Beyond the glimm'ring spark of our meridian sun,

PARISH PRIEST.

— They took their way,  
 Where long-extended plains of pleasure lay,  
 The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,  
 With Æther vested, and a purple sky :  
 The blissful seats of happy souls below ;  
 Stars of their own and their own suns they know.  
 Some in heroic verse divinely sing ;  
 Others in artful measure lead the ring.  
 Here patriots live who for their country's good,  
 In fighting fields, were prodigal of blood.  
 Priests of unblemish'd lives here make abode,  
 And poets worthy their inspiring God ;  
 Those, who to worth their bounty did extend,  
 And those, who knew that bounty to commend.

VIRGIL, BY DRYDEN. -

Elysium shall be thine! The blissful plains  
 Of utmost earth, where Rhadamanthus reigns.  
 Joys ever young, unmix'd with pain or fear,  
 Fill the wide circle of the eternal year.  
 Stern winter smiles on that auspicious clime:  
 The fields are florid with unfading prime :  
 From the bleak pole no winds inclement blow,  
 Mould the round hail, or flake the fleecy snow :  
 But from the breezy deep the blest inhale  
 The fragrant murmurs of the western gale.

HOMER'S ODYSSEY, BY POPE.

Then bless'd the man, whom gracious heav'n has led  
 Thro' life's blind mazes to th' immortal dead !  
 Who safely landed on the blissful shore,  
 Nor human folly feels, nor frailty more !

— Wisely heaven in silence has confin'd  
 The happier dead, lest none should stay behind.

BROOME.

Let us suppose a man blind and deaf from his  
 birth, who being grown up to man's estate, is by the  
 dead-palsy, or some other cause, deprived of his  
 feeling, tasting, and smelling; and at the same time  
 has

has the impediment of his hearing removed, and the film taken off his eyes; what the five senses are to us, that the touch, taste and smell were to him. And any other ways of perception of a more refined and extensive nature were to him as inconceivable, as to us those are which will one day be adapted to perceive those things which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." And it would be just as reasonable in him to conclude that the loss of those three senses could not possibly be succeeded by any new inlets of perception; as in a modern freethinker to imagine there can be no state of life and perception without the senses he enjoys at present. Let us further suppose the same person's eyes, at their first opening, to be struck with a great variety of the most gay and pleasing objects, and his ears with a melodious concert of vocal and instrumental music: behold him amazed, ravished, transported; and you have some faint glimmering idea of the extatic state of the soul in that article in which he emerges from this sepulchre of flesh into life and immortality.

ADDISON.

Who would not willingly leave a *foolish, froward, illnatured* world, for the blessed society of wise friends and *perfect lovers*? What a felicity must it be to spend an eternity in such a noble conversation! where we shall hear the deep *philosophy* of heaven communicated *with mutual freedom* in the wise and amiable discourses of *angels* and *glorified spirits*: who without any reserve or affectation of mystery, without *passion*, or *interest*, or *peevish contention* for *victory*, do freely *philosophize*, and *mutually* impart the treasures of each other's knowledge. For since all saints there are great philosophers, and all philosophers perfect saints, we must needs *suppose knowledge and goodness, wisdom and charity* to be equally intermingled throughout all their conversations; being so, what can be imagined more

more delightful! When therefore we shall leave this *impertinent*, unsocial world, and all our *good old friends* that have gone to heaven before us, meet us as soon as we are landed on the shore of *eternity*, and with infinite congratulations for our safe arrival, shall conduct us into the company of the *patriarchs* and *prophets*, *apostles* and *martrys*, and introduce us into an intimate acquaintance with them, and with all those brave and generous souls who by their *glorious examples* have recommended themselves to the world; when we shall be familiar friends with *angels* and *archangels*, and all the *courtiers* of *heaven* shall call us *brethren*, and bid us enter into their *Master's* joy.

In a page or two further the good Doctor says,—The happiness of a man in *heaven* consists not so much in the glory and splendor of the place, as in the inward state of his own mind, which forms a suitableness of temper to the heavenly objects that doth always *truly* employ and exercise its faculties about them.—The main difference between *virtue* and *heaven* is only *gradual*; that virtue is the beginning of *heaven*, and heaven is the perfection of virtue.

*Dr. Scott's Christian Life, Chap. 1.*

But nobler strains of bright seraphic love  
Warm my bold fancy in the realms above,  
Delighted with some kindred soul to stray,  
And range the dazzling realms of purer day.

MAURICE.

Hail! faithful champions of your God,  
Who once have felt the poignant rod,  
Endur'd the malice of your foes,  
And drank a bitter cup of woes;  
But now the great reverse is given,  
The dear inheritance of heaven!

Where the frail tenement of dust,  
That once infected mortal peace,  
Form'd in the likeness of the just,  
Partake of joys that never cease;

Where

Where happy souls the glorious struggle sing,  
Till the bright realms with boundless triumph ring.

COURTIER.

O, ye blest scenes of permanent delight!  
Full above measure! lasting beyond bound!  
A perpetuity of bliss is bliss:  
Could you so rich in rapture, fear an end,  
That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,  
And quite unparadise the realms of light.  
Safe are ye lodg'd above these rolling spheres:  
The baleful influence of whose giddy dance  
Sheds sad vicissitude on all beneath.

DR. YOUNG.

My friend Dick said, that he had often pleased himself with the hopes of not only seeing and being acquainted with eminent Christians, such as Newton, Locke, Boyle, Fenelon, Pascal, the Man of Ross, Dr. Johnson, J. Hanway, Howard, and others, but also Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Cicero, Cato, &c.

I advised our good lady to read Dr. Scott's Christian Life, particularly the first part; and also Sherlock, on the Happiness of good Men in a future State; and Dr. Watts, on the Happiness of Separate Spirits. I also told her that she would find some rational, and many amusing passages on the happiness of the celestial regions, in Mrs. Rowe's works. I will conclude this long letter with a few lines of that pious lady:

O, come! ye sacred gusts, ye pure delights,  
Ye heav'nly sounds, ye intellectual sights;  
Ye gales of paradise, that lull to rest,  
And fill with silent calm the peaceful breast;  
With you, transporting hopes, that boldly rise,  
And swell, in blissful torrents, to the skies;  
That soar with angels on their splendid wings,  
And search th' arcana of celestial things,  
Here let me dwell and bid the world adieu!  
And still converse, ye glorious scenes, with you.

Although I intended to conclude with the above lines, yet I cannot help adding the following:

The



The blooming heirs of heav'n's immortal throne!  
 On earth's vain scenes they look superior down,  
 Nor heed the tempest's rage that howls below;  
 But firmly fix'd on their eternal rock,  
 Dauntless they bear the billows' rudest shock,  
 With bolder zeal aspire, with warmer rapture glow.

Death but unlocks the adamant gate  
 That barr'd their passage to the happier state:  
 They see attendant angels hov'ring round;  
 They see the golden crown, their bright reward!  
 Celestial robes of dazzling white prepar'd,  
 And hear th' eternal hallelujahs sound!

As bolder now their raptur'd view they raise,  
 Th' Omnipotent his awful face displays,  
 From the bright centre of surrounding day;  
 And now no more can earth restrain,  
 With seraph wings they cleave th' ethereal plain,  
 And bound and revel in the unclouded ray.

MAURICE.

All hail, RELIGION!—thou alone canst fire  
 Our kindling thoughts with views beyond the tomb;  
 To brighter plains by thee we dare aspire,  
 And snatch a foretaste of the world to come.

Oh! still as through life's dreary vale I stray,  
 On my sad soul thy cheering influence pour;  
 That guided by thy bright unerring ray,  
 My feet may gain at length that heavenly shore.

MAURICE.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's,

## LETTER XIX.

—— Like a man that long in idle dreams  
Has lain, deluded to himself he seems.

MRS. ROWL.

Thus *Earth*, and all that earthly minds admire,  
Is swallow'd in *Eternity's* vast round.  
To that stupendous view when souls awake,  
*Times'* toys subside ; and *equal all* below.

DR. YOUNG.

---

Philosophy  
Dream'd of immortal life ; but dream'd by starts ;  
By starts awaked, and doubted.---To her search  
The light was feeble, and the field around  
Was long and dark, and desolate---She gave  
The palm to Hope---Hope on his rainbow plumed,  
Sat wrapt in vision, and his glittering wings  
Expanding reach'd the skies ; but Doubt behind,  
Slow dogg'd his flight, and breathed a sullen cloud,  
That screen'd its glories from his misty view.

OGILVIE'S PROVIDENCE.

DEAR FRIEND,

I NOW sit down to give you a few more particulars relating to my conversion to Christianity. My conversion was not instantaneous, but progressive ; for, in retreating from the cause of infidelity, I disputed every inch of ground before I relinquished it. I found it impossible long to remain a downright atheist, but was sceptical for some years ; and I even had an atheistical pamphlet, which was hard to be come at, reprinted, on hearing that the author had in great haste taken away nearly the whole of his own impression from the different booksellers where they had been left for sale. I also advised a Scotch bookseller to reprint another work in the cause of infidelity ; which he did, and I purchased many of the impression and sold them. During this period I did not think that  
the

the belief, or disbelief, of any article of faith, had any influence on the morals of mankind.

About nine or ten years since, one of the French emigrants wanted me very much to print a translation from the French of an atheistical work ; but having begun to see the bad effects of such publications, he could not prevail upon me to have any thing to do with him or his works ; nor from that time do I recollect vending any of the new productions of that kind, or any prohibited democratical work ; indeed I never would disseminate any disloyal publications, but steadily ever resisted the temptations on that head, even from men of high rank and title.

I for many years had doubts as to the immortality of the soul, and, at intervals, disbelieved that doctrine ; but as I occasionally read the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young, his strong arguments in favour of the soul's immateriality and immortality, prevented me from settling in unbelief on that important article. I also once dreamed, (pray do not laugh and think me still dreaming,) that I saw the finest poem I had ever read in my life ; on which I reasoned thus. As I never saw any composition equal to that which I read in my dream ; and as from the ideas which I retained of it when I awoke, it appeared a thousand times more beautiful than any thing I could compose when awake, therefore my soul must be immaterial ; for otherwise I could not, while in a state of sleep, have combined and arranged such a variety of beautiful and delightful ideas as to me appeared a new creation. On this head Bishop Butler says, " That we have no reason to think our organs of sense precipitous, is confirmed by instances of persons losing some of them, the living beings themselves, their former occupiers, remaining unimpaired. It is confirmed also by the experience of dreams ; by which we find we are at present possessed of a latent, and, what would otherwise be, an unimagined, unknown power of  
perceiving

perceiving sensible objects, in as strong and lively a manner without our external organs of sense as with them."

I presume, that the good Bishop in this passage only speaks of our common dreams, which was by no means the case of mine. Dr. Young, in the following lines, intends only common dreams.

'Tis *past* conjecture ; all things rise in proof :  
While o'er my limbs *sleep's* soft dominion spreads,  
What though my soul fantastic measures trod  
O'er fairy fields ; or mourn'd along the gloom  
Of pathless woods ; or down the craggy steep  
Hurl'd headlong, swam with pain the mantled pool ;  
Or scal'd the cliff ; or danc'd on hollow winds  
With antic shapes ? Wild natives of the brain !  
Her ceaseless flight, tho' devious, speaks her nature  
Of subtler essence than the trodden clod ;  
Active, aerial, tow'ring unconfin'd,  
Unfetter'd with her gross companion's Fall.  
Ev'n silent night proclaims my soul *immortal* :  
Ev'n silent night proclaims eternal Day.  
For human weal, heav'n husbands all events ;  
Dull sleep instructs, nor sports vain dreams in vain.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

The following lines were often impressed on my mind, and were repeated by me times without number, when alone :

————— Why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself and startles at destruction ?  
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us ;  
'Tis heav'n itself that points out an hereafter,  
And intimates eternity to man.  
Eternity ! thou pleasing, dreadful thought !

ADDISON'S CATO.

It is not my design to adduce the proofs of those doctrines that I have again heartily embraced, but I cannot help inserting a few quotations on some of those points. Cicero says, in his *Tusc. Quest.* "We can never believe, that after the virtuous have struggled through all their labours, an infinitely good



good and Almighty-God will let them fall into an eternal sleep." In another place he says, "If I am wrong in believing that the souls of men are immortal, I please myself in my mistake: nor while I live, will I ever chuse, that this opinion, where-with I am so much delighted, should be wrested from me: but if, at death I am to be annihilated, as some minute philosophers imagine, I am not afraid lest those wise men, when extinct too, should laugh at my error."

Who reads his *Bosom*, reads immortal life;  
Or, *Nature*, there, imposing on her Sons,  
Has written fables; man was made a lie.  
Why *discontent* for ever harbour'd there?  
Incurable consumption of our peace!  
Resolve me, why, the *Cottager* and *King*,  
He whom sea-sever'd realms obey, and lie  
Who steals his whole Dominion from the waste,  
Repelling Winter Blasts with mud and straw,  
Disquieted alike, draw sigh for sigh,

In Fate so distant, in Complaint so near?  
Is it, that things terrestrial can't content?  
Deep in rich pasture, will thy flocks complain?  
Not so; but to their *master* is deny'd  
To share their sweet *serene*. Man ill at Ease,  
In this, not his *own* place, this foreign field,  
Where Nature foddors him with other Food,  
Than was ordain'd his cravings to suffice;  
Poor in abundance, famish'd at a feast,  
Sighs on for something *more*, when *most* enjoy'd.  
Is heav'n kinder to thy flocks than Thee?  
Not so; thy pasture richer, but more remote;  
In part remote; for that remoter part  
Man bleats from *instinct*, though perhaps, debauch'd  
By *Sense*, his *Reason* sleeps, nor dreams the cause.  
The cause how obvious, when his Reason wakes!  
His Grief is but his Grandeur in disguise;  
And discontent is *immortality*.

Shall the sons of *Æther*, shall the Blood of heav'n,  
Set up their hopes on earth, and stable *here*,  
With brutal acquiescence in the mire?  
Lorenzo! No! they shall be nobly paid;  
The glorious *Foreigners*, distress, shall sigh  
On thrones; and thou *congratulate* the sigh:

Man's misery declares him born for bliss ;  
 His anxious heart *asserts* the truth I sing,  
 And gives the *Sceptic* in his head the lie,  
 Nor are our pow'rs to perish immature ;  
 But, after feeble *Effort here*, beneath  
 A brighter sun, and in a nobler soil,  
 Transplanted from this sublunary bed,  
 Shall flourish fair, and put forth all their bloom.

Reason progressive, *instinct* is complete ;  
 Brats soon their zenith reach ; their little All---  
 Were man to live coeval with the sun,  
 The patriarch-pupil would be learning still---

Man's heart th' Almighty to the *Future* sets,  
 By secret and inviolable springs ;  
 And makes his Hope his sublunary Joy.

Since *Virtue's* Recompence is doubtful, *Here*,  
 If man dies wholly, well may we demand,  
 Why is man suffer'd to be good in vain ?  
 Why to be good in vain is man *betray'd* ?  
 By sweet complacencies from *Virtue* felt ?  
 Why whispers *Nature* lies on *Virtue's* part ?  
 Or if blind *instinct* (which assumes the Name  
 Of Sacred Conscience) plays the Fool in *Man*,  
 Why Reason made Accomplice in the Cheat ?  
 Or both all true ; or, Man survives the Grave

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Cicero, in his charming treatise on old age, says,  
 " This is my firm persuasion, that since the human  
 soul exerts itself with so great activity, since it has  
 such a remembrance of the past, such a concern for  
 the future, since it is enriched with so many arts,  
 sciences, and discoveries, it is impossible but the  
 being which contains all these must be immortal."

O tell not, most subtle disputant,  
 That I shall die, the wick of life consum'd,  
 And spite of all my hopes drop into the grave,  
 Never to rise again, will the Great God,  
 Who thus by annual miracle restores  
 The perish'd year, and youth and beauty gives,  
 By resurrection strange, where none was ask'd,  
 Leave only man to be the scorn of Time  
 And sport of death ? Shall only he one Spring,  
 One hasty Summer, and one Autumn see,  
 And then to Winter irredeemable

Be doom'd, cast out, rejected, and despis'd ?  
 Tell me not so, or by thyself enjoy  
 The melancholy thought. Am I deceiv'd ?  
 So let me be for ever. If I err,  
 It is an error sweet and lucrative.  
 For should not heav'n a further course intend  
 Than this short race of life, I am at least  
 Thrice happier than thee, ill-boding fool,  
 Who strivest in vain the awful doom to fly  
 That I not fear. But I *shall* live again,  
 And still on that sweet hope shall my soul feed.  
 A medicine it is that with a touch  
 Heals all the pains of life ; a precious balm,  
 That makes the tooth of sorrow venomless,  
 And of her hornet sting so keen disarms  
 Cruel Adversity.-----

MURDIS.

I will conclude this with a few lines from my favourite author.

*Eternity's* vast ocean lies before thee.  
 Give the mind sea-room ; keep it wide of *earth*,  
 That Rock of souls *immortal* ; cut thy cord ;  
 Weigh anchor ; spread thy sails, call ev'ry wind ;  
 Eye the Great *Pôle-star* ; make the Land of Life.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

I will proceed with my narrative in my next.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XX.

'Tis done, at last, the great deciding part!  
 The world's subdu'd, and thou hast all my heart.  
 I see a boundless prospect still before,  
 And dote upon my former joys no more;  
 Celestial passions kindle in my soul,  
 And ev'ry low, inglorious thought controul.

MRS. ROWL.

Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,  
 And how the world begun, and how man fell  
 Degraded by himself, on Grace depending.

PARADISE REGAINED.

On argument alone my *faith* is built;  
*Reason* pursu'd is *Faith*; and, unpursu'd  
 Where proof invites, 'tis Reason then, no more:  
 And such our *Proof*, that, or our *Faith* is *right*,  
 Or *Reason* lies, and heav'n design'd it wrong.

DR. YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

ABOUT eight years since, the being and providence of God, were a good deal impressed on my mind, so that I often reflected on those important subjects in my garden, in the fields, in bed, in short in all places. The principles and duties of natural religion had some influence on my mind and conduct. I sometimes went to church, where I felt a spirit of devotion; so that I found my heart engaged in the prayers, and felt some degree of thankfulness to God. I also felt the same spirit of devotion at times when not at church. Nor could I help admiring the character of Christ; his precepts also appeared to me perfectly well calculated to promote both public and private happiness.

In this state of mind I went quietly and contentedly on for some years. As I had no relish for the ridiculous pursuits of those around me, my amusement was reading, or, now and then, scribbling.

I at



I at last (as I have before informed you) began to read some extracts from books on divinity, which I found in the Reviews. Those extracts gave me a more thoughtful turn, and left my mind open to conviction. The first entire work that I read in defence of revealed religion, was Archdeacon Paley's *View of the Evidences of Christianity*. This very excellent work I perhaps never should have read, had I not met with a pirated edition of it, (the whole being printed in one volume duodecimo, on decent paper,) which I bought bound, for three and sixpence. I ever was disgusted and put out of humour when I saw any work spaced out with leads, and other contrivances used to enlarge its bulk, and to make it sell for four times the price it might be well afforded at; there are many thousands of my mind, who will not purchase where such extortion is practised. The work in question might be handsomely printed in one volume (instead of two) octavo, for such as wish for a handsome edition; and for such as wish to have it cheap, it might be printed on a decent paper, in duodecimo, and sold bound for 3s. 6d. were this done, there would be no bounds to the sale of it, as thousands would be given away; and very great good done; and the publisher would in the end get more by it. I would just observe also, that when books in divinity are published at such extravagant prices, the authors (who, sometimes, having sold or given away their copyright, have no hand in setting the prices) are blamed, and looked upon as extortioners, while they are enforcing the pure doctrines and precepts of the gospel.—But to return from this digression.

By the time I had gone through this very able and convincing work once, I was effectually humbled, and obliged to cry out, God be merciful to me a dreadful sinner! I was obliged to confess, that the wisdom, power and love of God were displayed in the gospel.

But although I was convinced that the gospel was a revelation from God, yet I had great doubts as to the dispensations contained in the Old Testament: nor did I think the New Testament an inspired work: in short, I gave but little more credit to either the Old or New Testament, than I did to Xenophon, or Livy. As I believed that Xenophon and Livy were honest men, and faithful historians, I therefore credited their narrations. And even in this view of the authors of the New Testament, I could not help believing that the Christian religion was a revelation of the will of God. On the same evidence I saw that I ought to believe the Old Testament dispensations were from God; yet the various objections which unbelievers have repeatedly made to the Jewish dispensation, together with many texts in the Old Testament, were difficulties. I could not get over, until I had read part of Paley again: and also the third enlarged edition of the first volume, and the second edition of the second volume of Jenkin's Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion. This very extraordinary, learned and sensible work, gave me ample satisfaction on those heads:—and it is worth remarking, that this work was written before Tyndal, Collins, Morgan, &c. wrote their objections and misrepresentations, which makes them the more inexcusable. I have induced several of the clergy to look into this masterly work, who now think it a performance that discovers great reading, great abilities, and biblical learning.

When I had satisfied myself on the above heads, I still had my doubts as to some of the mysteries of the Christian Religion. The divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the atonement made by Christ, &c. I could not believe, because I could not comprehend them. I believed that Christ was sent by God to give mankind a pure system of morality, to assure us of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and future rewards and punishments:—

nishments : and that by his perfect life, his sufferings and death, he had given us an excellent example. Further than this I could not believe, until I had again, and again, consulted the scriptures, various commentators, and the works of many other learned divines ; from whom I received great assistance ; particularly from Jenkin, and also from Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, an exceedingly valuable work. In this study I have employed a very large portion of my time, and in it I have found a lasting source of pleasure and delight.

After all my investigation, although I assent to the truth of those doctrines, I do not pretend that I comprehend them. I only believe them, because I think they are taught in the Old Testament, and by Christ and his Apostles in the New Testament.

The following passage in Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, pleased me much, " Hence, (says the Doctor) namely, from analogical reasoning, Origen has with singular sagacity observed, that ' he who believes the scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as we found in the constitution of nature.' On the quotation the Doctor adds, " And in like way of reflection it may be added, that he who denies the scripture to have been from God, upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by him. On the other hand, if there be an analogy, or likeness, between that system of things and dispensation of Providence, which revelation informs us of, and that system of things and dispensation of Providence which experience, together with reason, inform us of, i. e. the known course of Nature ; this is a presumption, that they both have the same Author and cause."

I have often, like other infidels, laughed at people's believing what they did not understand, without considering that, were we to believe no more

than what we understand, even of the common operations of nature, we should scarce believe any thing.

Deep in the Bosom of His universe,  
 Dropt down that *reas'ning* mite, that insect, Man,  
 To crawl, and gaze, and wonder at the scene:  
 That Man might ne'er presume to plead amazement  
 For disbelief of wonders in *himself*.  
 Shall God be less miraculous, than what  
 His hand has form'd? Shall *mysteries* descend  
 From *unmysterious*? Things more elevate,  
 Be more familiar? Uncreated lie  
 More obvious than Created, to the grasp  
 Of human thought? The *more* of Wonderful  
 Is heard in *Him*, the *more* we should assent.  
 Could we conceive *Him*, God he could not be;  
 Or he not God, or *we* could not be *Men*.  
 A God alone can comprehend a God;  
 Man's distance how immense! on *such* a theme  
 Know This, Lorenzo! (seem it ne'er so strange)  
 Nothing can *satisfy*, but what *confounds*;  
 Nothing but what *astonishes* is *true*.  
 The scene thou seest, attests the Truth I sing,  
 And ev'ry star sheds light upon my Creed.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Jenkin, when treating of the doctrine of the Trinity, vol. ii. page 401, says, "The sum is, that in the most perfect unity of the Divine Nature, do subsist the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, between whom is a real distinction, which though not the same, yet is equivalent to the distinction of persons among men. That there is this unity and this distinction, we learn from the scriptures; but what kind of distinction this is, or how far it is to be reconciled with our notion of persons amongst men, and after what manner it is consistent with the unity of the Godhead, the scriptures have not told us, and it is impossible for us to determine." In page 333, he says, "But some men will say, how is this union between the divine and human nature in Christ made, or wherein doth it consist? To whom we may reply, as our Saviour sometimes did,  
 by



by asking another question, and inquiring, How the body and soul of man is united? or, How God is present in all places? And how *in him we live, move, and have our being?*" Page 196, he observes, "The best philosophers have been able to give no account how motion can be communicated without an immediate impulse, or concourse of the Divine power." Page 147, "Through an immense void space, the sun's rays find their regular and constant way, and in a few minutes pass from the sun to the earth; for which there is no cause assignable from the attractive power; which should rather detain the rays of light in a perpetual circulation about the sun's centre, than dart them forth, by so violent a motion, to the remotest distance. But God said, *Let there be light, and there was light. He prepared the light and the sun.* This is the best and the most philosophical account, that has ever been given of the productions of light." Again, "If all the fluid which the sun loses in a year, were brought into a solid form, it would not equal a grain of sand."

Gilpin in his second sermon observes, "But it is mysterious, says the deist. Aye, surely; and so is every pile of grass you tread on. But the question is not whether a thing be mysterious—for all things are mysterious—but whether the mystery be supported by evidence? The pile of grass appeals to all nature, for its being the work of God: and the truth of Christ's atonement, however mysterious, is supported by evidence equally strong.—It rests on all the evidence that scripture can give it."—

"This great doctrine is supported also by the analogy of God's moral government, under which we all act as a kind of redeemers, and mediators among each other, in our own little temporal affairs."

"Nor is it a weak argument in favour of this doctrine, when we appeal to our own feelings. We must be conscious, when we look into ourselves,  
of

of such unworthiness, as must entirely disqualify us for the divine favour, without some better introduction than our own. It is an opinion strongly implanted in our nature, Guilt always wishes for support." It is said of Leibnitz, that he never mentions the sacred books but with respect; *they are filled*, said he, *with a morality necessary to man*. He said also, we ought to judge of the works of God as wisely as Socrates did of those of Heraclitus, by saying, *That which I comprehend, pleases me; I believe the rest would not please me less, if I understood it.*"

---

Man to himself

Is all a miracle, I cannot see  
 The latent cause, yet such I know there is,  
 That gives the body motion, nor tell  
 By what strange impulse 'tis, the ready limb  
 Performs the purposes of will. How then  
 Shall thou or I, who cannot span ourselves,  
 In this our narrow vessel, comprehend  
 The being of a God.

VILLAGE CURATE.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Yours.

LETTER

## LETTER XXI,

— Tell if thou knowest,  
 Why every nation, every clime, though all  
 In laws, in rites, in manners disagree,  
 With one consent expect another world,  
 Where wickedness shall weep? Why paynim bards  
 Fable Elysian plains, Tartarean lakes,  
 Styx and Cocytus? Tell, why Hali's sons  
 Have feign'd a paradise of mirth and love,  
 Banquets and blooming nymphs? Or rather tell,  
 Why, on the brink of Orellana's stream,  
 Where never science rear'd her sacred torch,  
 Th' untutor'd Indian dreams of happier worlds  
 Behind the cloud-topt hill? Why in each breast  
 Is plac'd a friendly monitor, that prompts,  
 Informs, directs, encourages, forbids?  
 Tell, why unknown evil grief attends,  
 Or joy on secret good? Why Conscience acts  
 With tenfold force, when sickness, age, or pain  
 Stands tott'ring on the precipice of death?  
 Or why such horror gnaws the guilty soul  
 Of dying sinners, while the good man sleeps  
 Peaceful and calm; and with a smile expires?

DR. GLYNN.

DEAR FRIEND,

YOU ask whether I am still satisfied and pleased with those parts of the *Memoirs* of my Life, in which I have made so free with Mr. Wesley and his people? I answer in the negative. I am not pleased, or satisfied, on that head, for the following reasons.

I now think that I have treated serious subjects in too light and trifling a manner; and that some of my stories should have been omitted, for obvious reasons. The late Mr. Badcock says, "In Warburton's works (against the Methodists) there is too much levity for a Bishop, and too much illiterate abuse for a Christian." Even while I remained a freethinker, I sometimes thought that I had been too severe towards them; as a Christian, I see my faults

faults in a still stronger light.—A real religious person will be careful how he speaks of the faults and failings of others: nor will he treat religious subjects with levity.

Although I was an infidel when I wrote my Memoirs, yet I was very careful that, in what I wrote against the Methodists, nothing should point against (what I conceived to be) Christianity: but although I have not said any thing against what I conceived to be revealed religion; yet I find that some infidels have so understood me; from which I learn that what was intended to be levelled only against enthusiasm and fanaticism, is by some of those unbelievers, supposed to be pointed against revealed religion, so that if by any means I have contributed towards confirming, or hardening any unbeliever in his infidelity, I am sorry on that account also.

In the latter end of the year 1791, when my Memoirs were first published, I had not witnessed, to its extent, the pernicious influence of infidel opinions upon all ranks in society. After I became better acquainted with the dreadful effects of infidelity in others, I was sorry for what I had done, for I was then fully convinced, that the generality of mankind will always be much happier and better whilst under the influence of religious fanaticism, and even superstition, than when they have lost all regard to, or sense of, religion. Besides, I had known by myself and others, that for want of sufficient knowledge, many when they are reasoned out of fanaticism, are liable to go to the other extreme, by plunging into infidelity.

If then, while yet an infidel, I could see reasons why my strictures on Mr. Wesley's people should have been omitted, you may easily conclude that I am not satisfied on that head now my views of things are so much altered.

On this head I formerly quoted a passage from that inconsistent infidel Rousseau; I found fault with



with it because I did not understand it, (no uncommon thing) ; the reason I did not understand it was because I read it in a publication where it was garbled ; I have since found it in its proper place and state, it is in the third volume of his *Emilius*, and from thence I will transcribe it.

“ Avoid all those who, under pretence of explaining natural causes, plant the most destructive doctrines in the hearts of men ; and whose apparent scepticism is an hundred times more dogmatical and affirmative, than the decisive tone of their adversaries. Under the haughty protest of being the only persons who are truly enlightened, honest, and sincere, they subject us imperiously to their magisterial decisions, and give us for the true principles of things, only unintelligible systems, which they have raised in their own imaginations. Add to this, that while they overturn, destroy and trample under feet every thing that is respectable among mankind, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation of their misery ; and take from the rich and powerful the only check to the indulgence of their passions ; and they eradicate from our hearts the remorse of guilt, and the hopes of virtue ; absurdly boasting themselves at the time the friends and benefactors of mankind. The truth, say they, can never be hurtful : so far I am of their opinion, and this is to me a great proof that what they teach cannot be true.”

To the above Rousseau adds, in a note, the following :

“ The contending parties reciprocally attack each other with so many sophisms, that it would be a rash enterprise to undertake to expose them all. One of the most common on the philosophical side of the question is, to contrast an imaginary people, supposed to be all good philosophers, with another people all bad Christians ; as if it were more easy to make a people true  
“ philosophers

“ philosophers than good Christians. I know not  
“ whether among individuals, one be more easily  
“ met with than the other ; but this I know, that  
“ when we speak of a people, we must suppose  
“ they would as much abuse a philosophy without  
“ religion, as they do religion without philosophy ;  
“ and this consideration seems to me to make a  
“ great difference in the question. Bayle has  
“ proved very acutely, that fanaticism is more per-  
“ nicious than atheism ; and this is not to be dis-  
“ puted, but he neglected to observe, what is ne-  
“ vertheless true, that fanaticism, though sangui-  
“ nary and cruel, is a great and animating passion,  
“ that it elevates the heart of man, and makes him  
“ look down with contempt on death ; that it is a  
“ prodigious spring of action, and requires only to  
“ be duly regulated in order to produce the most  
“ sublime virtues ; whereas on the contrary, irre-  
“ ligious and a philosophical spirit in general, at-  
“ taches us to life, enervates and debases the soul,  
“ concentratering all our passions in self-interest ;  
“ and thus sapping by degrees the foundations of  
“ society. If atheism be less sanguinary, it is less  
“ out of love to peace than from an indifference to  
“ virtue : let the world go how it will it little con-  
“ cerns these pretended sages ; provided they can  
“ loll at ease in their closets. Their principles do not  
“ excite them to slaughter, but they prevent them  
“ from adding to their number, by corrupting the  
“ manners which tend to their increase ; by de-  
“ taching themselves from their species, and re-  
“ ducing all their affections to a selfish egotism, as  
“ fatal to population as to virtue. The indifference  
“ of a philosopher resembles the tranquillity of a  
“ state, under a despotic government ; it is the  
“ tranquillity of death, and more destructive than  
“ war itself. Thus fanaticism, though more fatal  
“ in its immediate effects, than what is called the  
“ philosophic spirit of the age, is much less so in  
“ its remoter consequences.

“ Philosophy,

“ Philosophy, on its own principles, cannot be  
“ productive of any virtue, which does not flow  
“ from religion, and religion is productive of many  
“ virtues, to which philosophy is a stranger. As to  
“ the practice, it is another thing, and remains to  
“ be examined. There is no man who practices in  
“ every particular the duties of his religion, when  
“ he has one, that is true; the greater part of  
“ mankind have hardly any religion at all, and  
“ practice nothing of what little they have; this  
“ also is very true: but after all, some have reli-  
“ gion, and practice it at least in part; and it is in-  
“ contestible, that motives of religion prevent them  
“ often from falling into vice, and excite to virtuous  
“ and commendable actions, which they had not  
“ performed but for such motives. Let a priest be  
“ guilty of a breach of trust; what does this prove  
“ but that a blockhead had confided in him? If  
“ Pascal himself had done it, this would have  
“ proved Pascal an hypocrite; but nothing more.—  
“ But a priest!—Well, and what then? Are those  
“ who make a traffic the truly religious? The  
“ crimes of the clergy by no means prove that reli-  
“ gion is useless, but that few persons are reli-  
“ gious.

“ Modern governments are undoubtedly indebted  
“ to Christianity for their most solid authority, and  
“ the rarity of revolutions; it has even rendered  
“ them less sanguinary; this is proved by compari-  
“ ing them with the ancient governments. Religion  
“ better understood, hath by banishing fanaticism  
“ given a greater mildness to Christian manners.  
“ This alteration is not the effect of letters, for we  
“ do not find that wherever literature hath flour-  
“ ished, humanity hath been at all times the more  
“ respected; the cruelty of the Athenians, the  
“ Egyptians, the Roman Emperors, and the Chi-  
“ nese, are evidences of this. On the other hand,  
“ what deeds of charity and mercy have been ef-  
“ fected by the gospel! how many restitutions and  
“ reparations

" reparations hath not the practice of confessions  
 " brought about among the Catholics? Among  
 " us how many reconciliations are effected, how  
 " many alms are distributed before approaching  
 " communion? Among the Jews, avarice let go  
 " its hold, and misery was banished from among  
 " them on the approach of their jubilee. Not a  
 " beggar was to be seen in their streets, as there is  
 " not among the Turks, whose charitable founda-  
 " tions are innumerable. By the principles of  
 " their religion they are taught to be hospitable  
 " even to the enemies of it. Chardin tells us, that  
 " the Mahometans imagine there is a bridge, which  
 " they call Poul-Serrho, thrown over the flames of  
 " hell, which they are to pass at the general resur-  
 " rection; and this they cannot do until they have  
 " repaired the injuries they have committed. Can  
 " I conceive that this bridge, which is to repair so  
 " many iniquities, does not actually prevent some?  
 " Suppose we were to deprive the Persians of this  
 " idea, by persuading them there is no such thing  
 " as their Poul-Serrho, nor any thing like it, where  
 " the oppressed shall be avenged on their op-  
 " pressors after death; is it not clear that the latter  
 " would be very much at their ease, and would be  
 " freed from the trouble of appeasing the former?  
 " It is, therefore, false that this doctrine is not  
 " hurtful; and therefore it cannot be true.

" Your moral precepts, my philosophers, are  
 " very fine; but pray let me know what sanction  
 " you have for them. Forbear a moment to wan-  
 " der from the point, and tell me plainly what you  
 " substitute in the place of the Poul-Serrho."

Although Rousseau in this note allows Bayle's  
 assertions to be true, yet I think it is evident, that  
 in his reasoning on it he has refuted it: and it  
 should be remarked, that this author was only ac-  
 quainted with a few philosophical atheists who spe-  
 culated in their closets. What would he have said  
 had he lived to see those opinions taught to the vul-  
 gar,



gar, and some of those philosophers guilty of the most horrid crimes?

From the examples that we have seen in France we should use much caution, even in laudable attempts to eradicate fanatical or superstitious notions from the minds of the common people. Amongst Mr. Wesley's people there are no doubt some very sensible men; that this should be the case with the bulk of them is not to be expected. It is obvious that neither themselves nor their creed could be corrected or reformed by the method I took; they were more likely to be induced to renounce religion altogether on that account also. I am not satisfied with my conduct towards them; but I will conclude this and resume the subject in my next.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XXII.

Nor let the charm of *everlasting* sleep  
Dispel the horrors of a future day.—

COURTIER.

Go, wisdom's hypocrite, o'erweening sage,  
Reasoning machine, alone of atoms form'd  
Sublime and free, mid the dull sons of clay;  
View there, with erring spleen, a wretched slave  
Of folly, sunk beneath his kindred brute.

DR. DUNCAN.

“ By hope affected virtue keeps the road  
“ That leads to heaven, and gains the blissful port.  
  
“ On his support the wretched still rely,  
“ Live on his words, and catch the balmy gale;  
“ While sweet religion points the weary eye  
“ To peace beyond this mortal vale.

“ Eclipse

" Eclipse the brightness of his glorious ray,  
 " Soon will the brow be cloth'd in gloomy care;  
 " But take his native influence away,  
 " Th' enfeebled soul must sink beneath despair:  
 " Destin'd to steer on life's tempestuous sea,  
 " O let me never lose a glimpse of thee!

DEAR FRIEND,

HAD not my last been so long I should have added a curious passage from the notes to Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, preached at Christ Church, upon Easter Tuesday, April 15, 1800. You know that Plutarch, Bacon, and other great and little men have said, that superstition is worse than atheism. I repeated their words in my Memoirs; but although we knew the effects of superstition, we were, until lately, ignorant of the full effects of atheism. As the subject is somewhat connected with that of my preceding letter, I will transcribe the passage.

" What, I would ask, (says the Doctor) are the  
 " general effects of superstition and atheism upon  
 " the happiness and the conduct of mankind? Su-  
 " perstition, it is granted, has many direct sorrows;  
 " but atheism no direct joys. Superstition admits  
 " fear, mingled with hope: but atheism, while it  
 " excludes hope, affords a very imperfect security  
 " against fear. Superstition is never exposed to the  
 " dreary vacuity in the soul, over which atheism is  
 " wont to brood in solitude and silence; but athe-  
 " ism is sometimes haunted by forebodings scarcely  
 " less confused, or less unquiet, than those by which  
 " superstition is annoyed. Superstition stands aghast  
 " at the punishments reserved for wicked men in  
 " another state; but atheism cannot disprove the  
 " possibility of such a state to all men, accompa-  
 " nied by consciousness, and fraught with evils  
 " equally dreadful in degree and duration, with  
 " those punishments. Superstition has often pre-  
 " served men from crimes; but atheism tends to  
 " protect them from weakness only. Superstition  
 " imposes

“ imposes fresh restraints upon the sensual appetites,  
 “ though it may often let loose the malignant pas-  
 “ sions; but atheism takes away many restraints  
 “ from those appetites, without throwing equal  
 “ checks upon those passions, under many circum-  
 “ stances which may excite them in the minds of  
 “ its votaries. Superstition is eager from a vicious  
 “ excess of credulity; but atheism is often obsti-  
 “ nate from an excess of incredulity, equally vici-  
 “ ous. Superstition is sometimes docile from con-  
 “ scious weakness; but atheism is always haughty,  
 “ from real or supposed strength. Superstition  
 “ errs, and perverts only in consequence of error;  
 “ but atheism rejects, and for the most part, dis-  
 “ dains to examine after rejection. Superstition  
 “ catches at appearances; but atheism starts back  
 “ from realities. Superstition may, in a favourable  
 “ moment, be awakened to the call of truth;  
 “ but atheism is generally deaf to the voice of that  
 “ charmer, charm she never so wisely.”

Further on the Doctor says,

“ We may without the imputation of folly ven-  
 “ ture to ask, whether the arguments against theism  
 “ be such as usually produce a steady *assent*, and  
 “ to warrant an unlimited affiance? Without the  
 “ imputation of perverseness, we may not be in  
 “ haste to apply to the judgment of every atheist,  
 “ what Taylor eloquently says of the will, that, like  
 “ the magnetic needle, ‘ it was full of trembling,  
 “ and uncertainty ere it became fixed at its beloved  
 “ point, wavered at first, because at first it doubted,  
 “ and then was at rest, because it *could* doubt no  
 “ more.’ After reaching that state of rest, atheism  
 “ may have the credit of rescuing a man from the  
 “ agitations of delusive hopes, and the torments of  
 “ groundless fears. But may it not destroy at the  
 “ same time other fears, which are very salutary in  
 “ checking our fantastic desires, and calming our  
 “ turbulent resentments; and may it not extinguish  
 “ other hopes too, which seem *necessary* to support

“ the bulk of mankind in their passage through this  
 “ vale of tears.” Page 97.

An atheist can never enjoy such happy moments  
 as the following lines describe.

Calm as the stillness which succeeds a storm,  
 Soft as the spring-tide in its mildest form,  
 When every bud, and every opening flower,  
 Exhales fresh sweetness from the vernal shower;  
 So still, so calm, so tranquilliz'd the breast,  
 When all the fiend-like passions are at rest;  
 When Grace and Nature's jarring discord cease,  
 And conscience whispers, all within is peace.

THOUGHTS ON HAPPINESS.

It is certainly possible even for a fanatic, or a superstitious person to experience such a charming state of mind at times: but it is not possible that an atheist ever should.

In every edition of my Memoirs is the following passage.

“ I have been often asked if I did not believe, or  
 “ rather know, that the Methodists were a vile sect  
 “ of hypocrites altogether? My reply has been  
 “ uniformly in the negative. I am certain that  
 “ they are not in general so: the greater part of  
 “ them indeed are very ignorant, (which is the case  
 “ of enthusiasts of every religion;) but I believe  
 “ that a very considerable number of the Methodists  
 “ are a sincere, honest, and friendly people. In  
 “ justice to those of that description it may not be  
 “ amiss to observe, that many artful, sly, designing  
 “ persons, having noticed their character, connection, &c. and knowing that a religious person  
 “ is in general supposed to be honest and conscientious, have been induced to join their societies,  
 “ and by assuming an appearance of extraordinary  
 “ sanctity, have the better been enabled to cheat  
 “ and defraud such as were not guarded against  
 “ their hypocritical wiles.”

If at a time when I had shaken hands with Christianity and parted, I was obliged in conscience to  
 assert



assert that they were in general honest, friendly and sincere; you may easily suppose that I am not now pleased with my attempts to render them ridiculous, as I learn by so doing I have in some measure been aiding the cause of infidelity. And, perhaps what I have said might also have tended to encourage some hardened and impenitent sinners, who are ever ready to apply what might be said in a light, trifling way, against fanaticism or superstition, to any degree of religious worship or conduct that is beyond the ordinary custom of the world.

I also think that I should not have endeavoured to render the whole of those people ridiculous, as by so doing I have grieved many who are sincerely worshipping God, and, as they think, in the best way and manner it is possible to worship him.

I still think that some of their tenets are wrong, and that they are led to believe some absurdities; yet it must be acknowledged that they have been the means of reclaiming and civilizing many ignorant, hardened and notorious wretches, in whom it were hard to say whether the devil or brute were most predominate; yet such as these have by them been induced ever after to live pious, sober, industrious members of society.

I must also observe, that when we see so much coldness and indifference towards religion and religious duties; when so many seem to think that if our brethren sleep they do well; it was not a time, at least for me, to be declaiming so much against enthusiasm. I must conclude this, and finish the subject in my next.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XXIII.

Here foul-mouth'd slander lay reclin'd,  
 Her snaky tresses hiss'd behind;  
 A bloated toad-stool rais'd her head;  
 The plumes of ravens were her bed;  
 She fed upon the viper's blood.

Revenge, that base Hesperian known  
 A chief support of Slander's throne,  
 Amidst the bloody crowd is seen,  
 And treach'ry brooding in his mien;  
 The monster often chang'd his gait,  
 But march'd resolv'd and fix'd as fate:  
 Envy commands a sacred band,  
 With sword and poison in her hand;  
 Around her haggard eye-balls roll;  
 A thousand fiends possess her soul.  
 The artful unsuspected sprite,  
 With fatal aim attacks by night.  
 Her troops advance with silent tread,  
 And stab the hero in his bed.

Th' insidious sland'ring thief is worse  
 Than the poor rogue who steals your purse.

COTTON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I AM also sorry that in my Memoirs I inserted two letters said to be written by Mr. Wesley. When I inserted them I informed my readers that I copied them from a pamphlet entitled "A Letter to the Rev. T. Coke, LL. D. and Mr. Moore, by an old Member [of Mr. Wesley's Society]. I was induced to believe those letters to be genuine, partly by their bearing some resemblance to Mr. Wesley's style and manner, but more so from the notice which was printed at the end of the second letter, and is as follows.

*Should any one entertain a doubt concerning the foregoing letters being written by Mr. Wesley, the author can produce the originals, for the satisfaction of*

*of such, if they will take the trouble to call on the publisher, who has his address, and will refer them to him.*

When I transcribed these letters from the above pamphlet, the third edition of my Memoirs was in the press; and as the printer was nearly come to the part where I wished them to be introduced, I sent the copy off in a hurry, and then set off to my house at Merton.

Some time after these extraordinary letters had been printed in my Memoirs, I was not quite satisfied that I had omitted to see the originals. Upon which I sent my head shopman, with my compliments to the author of the pamphlet, and requested a sight of those original letters; but, instead of complying with my request, he returned for answer, *that he had returned the letters to the persons to whom they were written.*

When I found that he could not, or would not produce the originals, I was more dissatisfied with myself for having inserted them in my Memoirs.

In all subsequent editions of those Memoirs I should have left them out; but after they had found a place there, had they been omitted, I thought my readers might be displeased, and think that I had not done right in omitting them; others that never saw the pamphlet from whence I informed my readers I had transcribed them, might think they were fabricated by me, and that I had from conscientious guilt left them out. Upon the whole, I thought it best not to omit them: so that they are to be found in about twelve thousand copies of the Memoirs of my life.

I have ever, in subsequent editions, informed my readers that I could not be certain as to their authenticity, as I had sent to the author and requested a sight of the originals, and that he had returned the above answer. I also shewed the pamphlet from whence I transcribed them to all that desired to see it; and I still keep it by me. It was printed for J.

Luffman, Alfred-buildings, Windmill-street, Moorfields; H. D. Symons, No. 20, Paternoster-row; J. Phillips, No. 27, City-road; and J. Cottle, Bristol.

Supposing Mr. Wesley to be the author of the first of these letters, he could not have been an honest man, or sincere in what he professed to believe, as I ever believed him to be until I saw that letter. Even while I was an infidel I respected him so much for these qualities, and his unwearied disinterested labours, in what he believed to be the cause of God and the good of mankind, that it always gave me pleasure to see him pass by my shop. After I had seen those letters I was often in doubt as to his real character. When I reflected on his primitive manner of living, his sufferings, his unparalleled labours for more than sixty years together, &c. I could hardly think it possible for a human being to be for such a length of time, and in such a manner, only acting a feigned part; for had he been the author of the first letter he must have been a hypocrite, or a freethinker, or both.

It is a horrid crime to misrepresent and blacken any person's character.

— “ The dark villain who shall aim  
 “ To blast a fair and spotless name,  
 “ He steals a precious gem away,  
 “ Steals what both Indies can't repay.”

It was still worse to blacken such a person as every pious man must acknowledge Mr. Wesley to have been. Notwithstanding (what I conceive to be) all his enthusiasm and wrong opinions, he certainly was a venerable character, who served his God and the King faithfully.

Being much dissatisfied with myself for inserting these Letters in my Life, lest by this means I should have (although unintentionally) helped to spread abroad a false opinion of a good man, I sent for Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. J. Wesley, and by the Doctor's account of his death, I am fully convinced that  
 his



his life was uniformly consistent with the opinion which I had formed of his character; and whoever will take the trouble to look over that part of the work will, with me, be convinced that those two letters which are ascribed to him, were fabricated to answer some base purpose.

Tread on his ashes still, ye ruffians, tread;  
By venal lies defame the sacred dead;  
With Satan still your feeble malice shew,  
The last poor efforts of a vanquish'd foe;  
T' arraign a saint deceas'd profanely dare,  
But look to meet him at the last great bar,  
And horribly recant your hellish slander there.

}

ELEGY ON R. JONES, ESQ.

I will transcribe the account of his death, vol. ii. page 454. Tuesday, March 1, 1791, "In the forenoon he said, 'I will get up.' While they were preparing his clothes, he broke out, in a manner that astonished all who were about him, in singing,

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life, and thought, and being last,  
Or immortality endures!"

"Having got him into his chair, they observed him change for death. But he, regardless of his dying body, said with a weak voice, 'Lord, Thou givest strength to those who can speak, and those who cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that thou loosest tongues.' He then sung,

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;  
"Who sweetly all agree"—

"Here his voice failed. After gasping for breath he said, 'Now we have done all.' He was then laid on the bed, from whence he rose no more. After resting a little he called to those who were with him, 'To pray and praise.' Soon after he

said, 'Let me be buried in nothing but what is woollen; and let my corpse be carried in my coffin, into the chapel.' And again called upon them to 'pray and praise;' and taking each by the hand, and affectionately saluting them, bade them farewell. Attempting afterwards to say something, which they could not understand, he paused a little, and then with all the remaining strength he had, said, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Again, lifting his hand, he repeated the same words in a holy triumph, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Something being given him to moisten his lips, he said, 'It will not do; we must take the consequence. Never mind the poor carcase.' Being told that his brother's widow was come, he said, 'He giveth his servants rest;' thanked her as she pressed his hand; and affectionately endeavoured to kiss her. His lips being again wet, he repeated his usual grace after a meal; 'We thank thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies: bless the church and king; grant us truth and peace, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.' After some pause, he said, 'The clouds drop fatness. The Lord is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.' He again called them to prayer, and appeared fervently to join in their petitions.

"Most of the following night he often attempted to repeat the psalm before mentioned; but could only get out, 'I'll praise—I'll praise.' On Wednesday morning his end drew near. Mr. Bradford, his old and faithful friend, who, with the affection of a son, had attended him many years, now prayed with him; and the last word he was heard to articulate was 'farewell.'

"A few minutes before ten, on the second day of March, while a number of his friends were kneeling round his bed, died Mr. *John Wesley*, without a groan. He was in the eighty-eighth year of his age; had been sixty-five years in the ministry; and the preceding pages will be a lasting memorial of his  
uncommon

uncommon zeal, diligence, and usefulness in his Master's work, for more than half a century. His death was an admirable close of so laborious and useful a life."

In reviewing Mr. Wesley's character, Dr. Whitehead quotes (page 469) what Dr. Johnson said of him, viz. "Mr. Wesley's conversation is good; he talks well on any subject; I could converse with him all night." Page 472, "His (Mr. Wesley's) liberality to the poor knew no bounds, but an empty pocket. He gave away, not merely a certain part of his income, but all he had: his own wants provided for, he devoted all the rest to the necessities of others. He entered upon this good work at an early period. We are told when he had thirty pounds a year he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two-and-thirty. The third he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds, still he lived on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two." In this ratio he proceeded during the rest of his life; and in the course of fifty years, it has been supposed, he gave away between twenty and thirty thousand pounds."

I have said before, in my Memoirs, that he left behind him at his death 4*l.* 10*s.*

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER

## LETTER XXIV.

With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd ;  
 Tho' harsh the precept, yet the Preacher charm'd.  
 For letting down the golden chain from high,  
 He drew his audience upward to the sky.  
 He bore his great commission in his look :  
 Yet sweetly temper'd awe ; and soft'ned all he spoke,  
 He preach'd the joys of heav'n, and pains of hell ;  
 And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal :  
 But on eternal Mercy lov'd to dwell. }  
 His preaching much, but more his practice wrought ;  
 (A living Sermon of the Truths he taught ;) }  
 For this by Rules severe his Life he squar'd,  
 That all might see the doctrine which they heard,  
 For priests, he said, are patterns for the rest :  
 (The Gold of Heav'n bears the God impress'd)  
 But when the precious Coin is kept unclean,  
 The Sovereign's Image is no longer seen.  
 If they be foul, on whom the people trust,  
 Well may the baser Brass contract a rust,  
 Ever at hand was he without request,  
 To serve the sick ; to succour the distress'd :  
 Tempting on foot alone, without affright  
 The dangers of a dark tempest'ous night.  
 Such was the Saint ; who shone with every grace,  
 Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's Face.  
 God saw his Image lively was express'd ;  
 And his new work, as in Creation, bless'd.

DRYDEN'S GOOD PARSON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I HOPE you will excuse me if I give you one letter more on Mr. Wesley, as I think that such an extraordinary person must be interesting to every curious observer of human nature ; and having been misled and deceived myself to the prejudice of his real character, I am the more interested in what concerns him.

Page 477, Dr. Whitehead says, " I shall finish this review of Mr. Wesley's character, with two or three sketches of it drawn up by different persons."

" Now that Mr. John Wesley has finished his course upon



upon earth, I may be allowed to estimate his character, and the loss the world has sustained by his death. Upon a fair account it appears to be such, as not only annihilates all the reproaches that have been cast upon him; but such as does honor to mankind, at the same time that it reproaches them. His natural and acquired abilities, were both of the highest rank. His apprehension was lively and distinct; his learning extensive. His judgment, though not infallible, in most cases excellent. His mind was stedfast and resolved. His elocution was ready and clear, graceful and easy, accurate and unaffected. As a writer, his style, though unstudied and flowing with natural ease, yet for accuracy and perspicuity, was such as may vie with the best writers in the *English* language. Though his temper was naturally warm, his manners were gentle, simple, and uniform. Never were such happy talents better seconded by an unrelenting perseverance in those courses, which singular endowments, and his zealous love to the interests of mankind marked for him. His constitution was excellent: and never was a constitution less abused, less spared, or more excellently applied, in an exact subservience to the faculties of his mind. His labours and studies were wonderful: The latter were not confined to theology only, but extended to every subject that tended, either to the improvement, or the rational entertainment of the mind.

If we consider the reading he discovered by itself, his writings, and his other labours by themselves, any one of them will appear sufficient to have kept a person of ordinary application, busy during the whole of his life. In short, the transactions of his life could never have been performed, without the utmost exertion of two qualities; which depended not upon his capacity, but on the uniform stedfastness of his resolutions. These were inflexible temperance, and unexampled economy of time. In these he was a pattern to the age he lived in; and

an example, to what a surprising extent a man may render himself useful in his generation, by temperance and punctuality. His friends and followers have no reason to be ashamed of the name of *Methodist* he has entailed upon them: as, for an uninterrupted course of years, he has given the world an instance of the possibility of living without wasting a single hour; and of the advantage of a regular distribution of time, in discharging the important duties and purposes of life. Few ages have more needed such a public testimony of the value of time; and perhaps none have had a more conspicuous example of the perfection, to which the improvement of it may be carried.

“As a minister, his labours were unparalleled, and such as nothing could have supported him under, but the warmest zeal for the doctrine he taught, and for the eternal interests of mankind. He studied to be gentle, yet vigilant and faithful towards all. He possessed himself in patience, and preserved himself unprovoked, nay, even unruffled in the midst of persecution, reproach, and all manner of abuse, both to his person and name. But let his works praise him. He now enjoys the fruits of his labours, and that praise which he sought, not of men, but of God.

“To finish the portrait. Examine the tenor of of his life, and it will be found self-evidently inconsistent with his being a slave to any one passion or pursuit, that can fix a blemish on his character. Of what use were the accumulation of wealth to him, who, through his whole course, never allowed himself to taste the repose of indolence, or even of the common indulgence in the use of the necessities of life. Free from the partiality of any party, the sketches of this excellent character, with a friendly tear, pays it as a just tribute to the memory of so great and good a man, who when alive was his friend.”

Page 479, Dr. Whitehead says, “The following,

so far as it goes, is an accurate and beautiful picture of this extraordinary man."

"Very lately, I had an opportunity, for some days together, of observing Mr. *Wesley* with attention. I endeavoured to consider him, not so much with the eye of a friend, as with the impartiality of a philosopher; and I must declare, every hour I spent in his company, afforded me fresh reasons for esteem and veneration. So fine an old man I never saw. The happiness of his mind, beamed forth in his countenance. Every look shewed how fully he enjoyed 'The gay remembrance of a life well spent:' and wherever he went, he diffused a portion of his own felicity. Easy and affable in his demeanor, he accommodated himself to every sort of company, and shewed how happily the most finished courtesy may be blended with the most perfect piety. In his conversation, we might be at a loss whether to admire most, his fine classical taste, his extensive knowledge of men and things, or his overflowing goodness of heart. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless; both saw in his uninterrupted cheerfulness, the excellency of true religion. No cynical remarks on the levity of youth, embittered his discourse: no applausive retrospect to past times, marked his present discontent. In him, even old age appeared delightful, like an evening without a cloud; and it was impossible to observe him without wishing fervently, 'may my latter end be like his!'

"I find myself unequal to the task of delineating such a character. What I have said, may to some appear as panegyric; but there are numbers, and those of taste and discernment too, who can bear witness to the truth, though by no means to the perfectness of the sketch I have attempted. With such I have been frequently in company; and every one of them, I am persuaded, would subscribe to  
all

all I have said. For my own part, I never was so happy as while with him, and scarcely ever felt more poignant regret than at parting from him ; for well I knew, ' I ne'er should look upon his like again.'

I cannot forbear giving a part of another portrait which Dr. Whitehead has introduced in his work.

" His indefatigable zeal in the discharge of his duty has long been witnessed by the world ; but, as mankind are not always inclined to put a generous construction on the exertion of singular talents, his motives were imputed to the love of popularity, ambition, and lucre. It now appears he was actuated by a disinterested regard to the immortal interest of mankind. He laboured, and studied, and preached, and wrote, to propagate, what he believed to be the gospel of *Christ*. The intervals of those engagements were employed in governing and regulating the concerns of his numerous societies ; assisting the necessities, solving the difficulties, and soothing the afflictions of his hearers. He observed so rigid a temperance, and allowed himself so little repose, that he seemed to be above the infirmities of nature, and to act independent of the earthly tenement he occupied.

" The recital of the occurrences of every day of his life would be the greatest encomium.

" Had he loved wealth, he might have accumulated without bounds. Had he been fond of power, his influence would have been worth courting by any party. I do not say he was without ambition ; he had *that* which *Christianity* need not blush at, and which virtue is proud to confess. I do not mean, that which is grafted on splendor and large possessions ; but that which commands the hearts and affections, the homage and gratitude, of thousands. For him they felt sentiments of veneration, only inferior to those they pay to heaven : to him they looked as their father, their benefactor, their guide to glory and immortality : for him they fell prostrate



prostrate before God, with prayers and tears, to spare his doom, and prolong his stay. Such a recompence as this, is sufficient to repay the toils of the longest life. Short of *this*, greatness is contemptible impotence. Before this, lofty prelates bow, and princes hide their diminished heads.

“ His zeal was not a transient blaze, but a steady and constant flame. The ardor of his spirit was neither damped by difficulty, nor subdued by age. This was ascribed by himself, to the power of Divine grace ; by the world to *enthusiasm*. Be it what it will, it is what philosophers must envy, and infidels respect ; it is that which gives energy to the soul, and without which there can be no greatness or heroism.

“ Why should we condemn that in religion, which we applaud in every other profession or pursuit ? He had a vigour and elevation of mind, which nothing but the belief of the Divine favour and presence could inspire. This threw a lustre round his infirmities, changed his bed of sickness into a triumphal car, and made his *exit* an *apotheosis* rather than a dissolution.

“ He was qualified in every branch of literature : he was well versed in the learned tongues, in *Metaphysics*, in Oratory, in Logic, in Criticism, and every requisite of a *Christian* minister. His style was nervous, clear, and manly ; his preaching was pathetic and persuasive ; his Journals are artless and interesting ; and his compositions and compilations to promote knowledge and piety, were almost innumerable.

“ I do not say he was without faults, or above mistakes ; but they were lost in the multitude of his excellencies and virtues.

“ The great purpose of his life was doing good ; for this he relinquished all honor and preferment ; to this he dedicated all the powers of body and mind ; at all times and in all places, in season and out of season, by gentleness, by terror, by argument,

ment, by persuasion, by reason, by interest, by every motive and every inducement, he strove with unwearied assiduity, to turn men from the error of their ways, and awaken them to virtue and religion. To the bed of sickness, or the couch of prosperity; to the prison, the hospital, the house of mourning, or the house of feasting, wherever there was a friend to serve, or a soul to save, he readily repaired; to administer assistance or advice, reproof or consolation. He thought no office too humiliating, no condescension too low, no undertaking too arduous, to reclaim the meanest of God's offspring. The souls of all men were equally precious in his sight, and the value of an immortal creature beyond all estimation. He penetrated the abodes of wretchedness and ignorance, to rescue the profligate from perdition; and he communicated the light of life to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. He changed the outcasts of society, into useful members; and civilized even savages, and filled those lips with prayer and praise, that had been accustomed only to oaths and imprecations. But as the strongest religious impressions are apt to become languid without discipline and practice, he divided his people into classes and bands, according to their attainments. He appointed frequent meetings for prayer and conversation, where they gave an account of their experience, their hopes and fears, their joys and troubles; by which means they were united to each other, and to their common profession. They became centinels upon each other's conduct, and securities for each other's character. Thus the seeds he sowed sprang up and flourished, bearing the rich fruits of every grace and virtue. Thus he governed and preserved his numerous societies, watching their improvement with a paternal care, and encouraged them to be faithful to the end."

Page 484. "The figure of Mr. Wesley was remarkable. His stature was low; his habit of body in

in every period of life, the reverse of corpulent, and expressive of strict temperance; and continual exercise: and notwithstanding his small size, his step was firm, and his appearance, till within a few years of his death, vigorous and muscular. His face, for an old man, was one of the finest we have seen. A clear, smooth forehead; an aquiline nose, an eye the brightest and most piercing that can be conceived, and a freshness of complexion scarcely ever to be found at his years, and impressive of the most perfect health, conspired to render him a venerable and interesting figure. Few have seen him without being struck with his appearance: and many, who had been greatly prejudiced against him, have been known to change their opinion, the moment they were introduced into his presence. In his countenance and demeanor, there was a cheerfulness mingled with gravity; a sprightliness, which was the natural result of an unusual flow of spirits, and yet was accompanied with every mark of the most serene tranquillity. His aspect, particularly his profile, had a strong character of acuteness and penetration.

“In his dress, he was a pattern of neatness and simplicity. A narrow, plaited stock, a coat with a small upright collar, no buckles at his knees, no silk or velvet in any part of his apparel, and a head as white as snow gave an idea of something primitive and apostolic; while an air of neatness and cleanliness was diffused over his whole person.”

Perhaps I cannot conclude this letter better than with the following lines:

A dying Saint can true believers mourn?  
 Joyful they see their Friend to heaven return;  
 His animating words their souls inspire,  
 And bear them upwards on his car of Fire:  
 His looks when language fails, new life impart;  
 Heaven in his looks, and Jesus in his heart;  
 He feels the Happiness that cannot fade,  
 With everlasting Joy upon his Head.

Starts

Starts from the Flesh, and gains his native skies ;  
 Glory to God on High !—the Christian dies !  
 Dies from the world, and quits his earthly clod,  
 Dies, and receives the crown by Christ bestow'd,  
 Dies into all the Life and Plenitude of God. }

WESLEY.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XXV.

" Seest thou, Lorenzo ! where hangs all our hope ?  
 " Tach'd by the Cross, we live, or more than die."

" Lord ! I take thee at thy word,

" My wickedness I mourn ;

" Unto thee, my bleeding Lord,

" However late, I turn :

" Yes ; I yield, I yield at last,

" Listen to thy speaking blood,

" Me, with all my sins I cast

" On my atoning God."

DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE lately, on more than one occasion, been obliged to subscribe to the truth of the words of Christ, *If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine which I teach whether it be of God.* I am more than ever convinced, that if we do not *love darkness rather than light*, this light *will shine more and more* on our minds, and dispel the mists and darkness in which we are by nature and sin enveloped, and that the perfect day will at last burst forth on our souls ; and then it is that we understand the meaning of these words, *In my light ye shall see light.* I have before, in part, informed you, that for sometime  
 past



past I have been made willing, and very desirous of not only knowing the will of God, but also of doing it. And by the grace of God I have also, for some time, been able to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this sinful world, regardless of the sneers, laughs and jokes of my thoughtless acquaintance. In proportion as the concern for my own salvation sunk deeper in my mind, the more was I affected in reflecting on the condition of my fellow-creatures around me: the following lines have often been mournfully repeated by me:

“Ye simple souls that stray,  
 “Far from the path of peace,  
 “(That lonely, unfrequented way,)  
 “To life and happiness:  
 “Why will ye folly love,  
 “And throng the downward road,  
 “And hate the wisdom from above,  
 “And mock the sons of God?”

About twelve months since I sent for some cheap religious books, viz. *The Whole Duty of Man*, the *Great Importance of a Religious Life*, *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted*, *Brown's History and Doctrine of the New Testament*, *Gilpin's Lives of Truman, Atkins and Baker*, and various others; some of which I gave away, others I left at a poor man's house to be by him lent to such of the farmers, or poor people, as would read them. And I had reason to think that some little good was done, by thus giving them an opportunity of reading without any expence.

To some young men whom I thought would not read religious books, I lent *Robinson Crusoe's Adventures*, and some other moral and entertaining works, in order to employ them in the winter evenings, and by this means, prevent them from spending their evenings in bad company. For young women I got *Susan Gray, The Workhouse, &c.* I also got many of a cheap edition of *Addison's Evidence*:

dences of the Christian Religion, and some of Watson's Apology for the Bible, in Letters to T. Paine; these I put into the hands of freethinkers; and I believe they made some impression on their minds. I now saw that it was my duty, when opportunity offered, to point out the dreadful consequences of persisting in a wicked course of life, and of neglecting eternal concerns; and I perceived that those reproofs, and serious observations, made some little alteration in the conduct of several.

Last summer, being in Taunton, at the house of Mr. J. Smith, brother to my first wife, his son brought in a parcel of those religious tracts which are published by the Religious Tract Society, and sold cheap by T. Williams, Stationer's-court, Ludgate-street, London. I had heard before that there was such a society established, but knew not where their tracts could be had; nor did I know that they were such as were proper to be put into the hands of the poor; so that I was much pleased with an opportunity of procuring some of them. I took one of each of more than thirty sorts; and when I got home, Mrs. L. and I read them over together, in order to know if they were proper to be dispersed abroad, and whether they were calculated to do good to such as should read them. In going through these pamphlets I found that although the compilers had carefully avoided a party spirit, and appeared to be influenced by a love to their fellow-creatures, and a desire to promote the interest of religion in general, more than that of any sect or party in particular; yet I thought that in several of them inward religion was too much insisted upon. Although I looked upon myself as a member of the Church of England, yet I did not approve of that tract entitled, "the Good Old Way, or the Religion of our Forefathers, as explained in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of the Church of England, briefly displaying Man's *Ruin* by Sin; his *Recovery* effected by Christ; and his Gratitude, expressed by Obedience."

Obedience." Over the title of this I wrote, "methodistical," and would not send for one of them; on several others I wrote, "rather methodistical," and of such I sent for but a few, and those I intended for some of the most ignorant and the most hardened: for I was not so much prejudiced against the Methodists as to wish my fellow-creatures to live in sin and ignorance rather than become Methodists, but could have been heartily glad to have seen the bulk of mankind turn Methodists, rather than continue to live as though they were not accountable creatures,—as though there was no future state, in which the wicked will be punished, and the righteous rewarded; or, in other words, where every man shall receive *according as his works have been, whether good or bad*. Still I was not thoroughly sensible of man's utter inability to do any thing of himself towards his acceptance with God; that *salvation is by grace, and justification by faith* in the blood of Christ; of having peace with God, and an assurance of his pardoning mercy; and *the love of God shed abroad in our hearts*. These were subjects that did not much please me. I did not at this time deny that a very few of the highly favoured people of God might, possibly, be blessed with the knowledge of their being reconciled to God; but as to it being the common privilege of real believers, was what I could not believe.

The reading of those tracts increased the serious impressions which had been made before on my mind; and as I thought that most of them were, upon the whole, well calculated to awaken my poor neighbours in the villages around, to a sense of their wicked way of life, I sent for about three thousand of them, and many of them I have already given away to the farmers, labourers, soldiers, &c. The more I employed my time and money in attempts to be serviceable to the souls and bodies of my fellow-creatures, the more was I disposed towards religious duties, and enabled to enter into the spirit of religion,

religion, and I wished for the mind that was in Christ with some degree of ardor. Mrs. L. also partook much of the same disposition; so that no books now pleased us so well as those that treated of divine subjects. We had, some time before this, given up novels, romances, and books of a trifling nature. Now we even neglected history, voyages and travels, &c. not that we thought it wrong to read them, but because we found more pleasure and satisfaction while engaged with those that treated of divine truths and religious duties. We are sensible that we wanted continually to be put in mind of what we owed to God and our neighbour.

In a former letter I told you that I sent for Mr. Wesley's Life; but I did not inform you of some particulars relating to that circumstance. About a year ago, a respectable clergyman frequently called on me, and I told him that I was sorry that I had inserted in my Memoirs the two Letters that were ascribed to Mr. Wesley. He joined with me in wishing that I had not been so imposed upon. Not long after this he brought from Bristol Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley, 2 vols. 8vo. I having expressed a wish to see in what state of mind Mr. Wesley died. After having satisfied myself on that head, I returned the set of books, as I had no intention to read any more of the work, but the account of his death. In spring last, I wished again to see the account of his death, and I sent to the Temple of the Muses for the work; and after I had again read the account of his death, and his character, as drawn by several hands, and transcribed them, as in two former letters you have seen, I put by the set of books, having no inclination to be made acquainted with his ministerial proceedings. But after having read such a number of tracts, as mentioned above, and various volumes in divinity, and much in the bible, I again took up Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley, and as I saw by the title-page that  
it



it contained an account of Mr. Wesley's ancestors and relations, the life of Mr. Charles Wesley, (whom I had often heard preach,) and a history of Methodism, I requested Mrs. L. to help me in reading it through.

To describe the conflict, and the different commotions which passed in my mind while we were reading this excellent work is impossible. I have been instructed, delighted, much confounded, and troubled. That divine power which has been felt by thousands and tens of thousands under the preaching of Mr. Wesley, his brother Charles, and others of his preachers, again humbled me in the dust. I sunk down at the feet of Christ and washed them with my tears. Sorrow, joy, and love, were sweetly mingled together in my soul. I once more, after so many years, knew a little of what these lines express:

“ The godly grief, the pleasing smart,  
 “ The meltings of a broken heart.  
 “ The seeing eye, the feeling sense,  
 “ The mystic joy of penitence.

“ The guiltless shame, the sweet distress,  
 “ Th' unutterable tenderness,  
 “ The genuine, meek humility,  
 “ The wonder, ‘ why such love to me ?’

“ The o’erwhelming power of saving grace,  
 “ The sight that veils the seraph’s face,  
 “ The speechless awe that dares not move,  
 “ And all the silent heaven of love.”

I was now convinced that the pardoning love of God, which forty years since was first manifested to my soul, was a divine reality, and not the effect of a heated imagination. Thousands, and tens of thousands, who are gone to glory, have borne testimony to the truth of this doctrine; and I learn that there are still tens of thousands of living witnesses to the same glorious truth, and can joyfully sing,

Thy

Thy mighty name Salvation is,  
 And keeps my happy soul above,  
 Comfort it brings, and power and peace,  
 And everlasting love:  
 To me with thy dear name are given  
 Pardon, and holiness, and heaven.

Jesus, my all in all thou art,  
 My rest in toil, my ease in pain,  
 The med'cine of my broken heart;  
 In war my peace, in loss my gain,  
 My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,  
 In shame my glory and my crown.

I am,  
 Dear Friend,  
 Your's.

## LETTER XXVI.

Oh ye cold-hearted, frozen, formalists!  
 On such a Theme, 'tis impious to be calm;  
*Passion* is reason, transport temper, *here*.  
 Shall heav'n, which gave us ardor, and has shewn  
 Her own for Man so strongly, not disdain  
 What smooth emollients in theology,  
 Recumbent virtue's downy doctors preach,  
 That prose of piety, a lukewarm praise?  
 Rise odors sweet from *incense uninflam'd*?  
 Devotion, when lukewarm, is underout;  
 But when it glows, its heat is struck to heav'n;  
 To human hearts the golden harps are strung;  
 High heav'n's orchestra chaunts *Amen* to man.

---      ---      ---  
 Talk they of morals? O, Thou *bleeding Love*!  
 The grand morality is love of Thee.  
 Thou most indulgent, most tremendous pow'r!  
 Still more tremendous for thy wondrous love!  
 That arms, with awe more awful thy commands;  
 And foul transgression dips in sev'nfold night;  
 How our hearts tremble at Thy love immense!  
 In love immense inviolably just!  
 Thou, rather than thy *justice* should be stain'd,  
 Didst stain the *cross*; and work of wonders far  
 The greatest! that thy Dearest far might bleed.

YOUNG.

DEAR

DEAR FRIEND,

DIVINE truths now rushed upon me like a flood, and swept away all objections. I

- “ Feel the *great truths*, which burst the tenfold night
- “ Of *heathen error*, with a golden flood
- “ Of endless day : To *feel*, is to be fir'd ;
- “ And to *believe*, LORENZO, is to feel.”

I am at last constrained to acknowledge that the mighty power of God has been manifested from the beginning amongst the Methodists ; and that the same Almighty arm is still exerted in overturning the kingdom of darkness. Sinners are still brought from darkness to light ; are rescued from the power of sin and Satan. God is still adding daily to his church such as shall be saved. It is built on a rock, the Rock of Ages ; nor have the powers of earth and hell been able to prevail against it.

- “ The Lord is King, and earth submits,
  - “ Howe'er impatient of his sway :
  - “ Between the cherubim he sits,
  - “ And makes his restless foes obey.
- 
- “ All power is to our Jesus given ;
  - “ O'er earth's rebellious sons he reigns ;
  - “ He mildly rules the hosts of heaven,
  - “ And holds the powers of hell in chains.

I now can scarcely think it possible for an unprejudiced person to read the Life of Mr. Wesley, and not acknowledge that the path he took, and ever after continued in, was pointed out by the finger of God. By going out into the streets, highways and hedges, and calling sinners to repentance, and preaching salvation by grace to a lost world, what countless numbers have thrown down the weapons of their rebellion, and enlisted under the banner of the cross. Sinners of every description have been compelled to come in. Old, daring, hardened sin-

ners have been made humble and gentle as lambs. The wise, in the things of this world, have given up their wisdom, and have become teachable as little children. The self-righteous have been brought trembling to the foot of the cross, where they gladly accept of pardon and salvation as the free, unmerited gift of God through Christ; and feelingly join in singing,

I the chief of sinners am;  
Yet Jesus died for me!

I am astonished that no more of those good, well-meaning ministers, (for many such there are, both in the church of England and also amongst the Dissenters,) who have a concern for the welfare of mankind, and would gladly turn sinners from the error of their ways, but yet from year to year, and even for ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years together, keep on preaching without ever converting one soul to God, or even making any serious and lasting impression on their congregations, are not convinced that there must be something materially defective in their ministrations. They see the drunkard still gets drunk; they hear the swearer blaspheme as much as ever; they see the sabbath-day still profaned; fornication and adultery are still practised; the unholy continues unholy still; parents still bring up their children in forgetfulness of their Creator, and the things of another world.

In short, when they die, they leave the poor creatures over whom they were overseers, in as bad, or worse state than they found them.

How is it that such men do not reflect, and see that something must be fatally wrong either in the matter or manner of their preaching.

These gentlemen will occasionally dwell on the inefficacy of moral philosophy to reform mankind. They will point out the deplorable state which the heathen world was in before Christ came. They will clearly prove that the doctrines taught by Socrates, Aristotle,



Aristotle, Plato, and Epictetus, did but very little towards the reformation of manners. They will also, sometimes, treat of the wonderful effects produced by preaching of Christ crucified; and some of those will preach sermons, where the name of Christ is not once introduced. They seem to have forgotten him: and Plato's Commonwealth, Plutarch's Morals, and Tully's Offices, are substituted for the New Testament. They forget

— “The great truths which burst the tenfold night  
 “Of heathen error, with a golden flood.  
 “Of endless day.”

Talk they of morals? Oh, Thou bleeding Love!  
 The grand morality is love of Thee. YOUNG.

“It is said, that when Baxter first came to Kidderminster he found it overrun with ignorance and profaneness. He found but a single house or two, that used daily family prayer in a whole street; and, at his going away, but one family or two could be found, in some streets, that continued in the neglect of it. And on Lord's days, instead of the open profanation to which they had been so long accustomed, a person in passing through the town, in the intervals of public worship, might overhear hundreds of families engaged in singing psalms, reading the scriptures, or other good books, or such sermons as they had taken down on hearing them delivered from the pulpit. The number of his stated communicants rose to six hundred; of whom he himself declared, there were not twelve concerning whose sincere piety he had not reason to entertain good hopes. Blessed be God the religious spirit which was thus happily introduced, is yet to be traced in the town and neighbourhood, in some degree.”

The wonderful effects produced by the preaching, and other labours of the late Mr. Fletcher, at Madley, are pretty well known. I wish every minister

of the gospel would read his Portrait of St. Paul, as published by Mr. Gilpin. It is an excellent work. The various traits in St. Paul's character are drawn in a masterly manner ; and the traits that Mr. Gilpin has given us of the author, shews that the worth of immortal souls was deeply impressed on his heart. He took heed to himself and his doctrine, as one that was soon to appear before the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, to give an account of himself and those committed to his care.

Such as will read that work, and Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley, must learn that God is still with such as faithfully dispense his word, and boldly declare that there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved ; that other foundation can no man lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. It was by thus preaching Christ, that three thousand were converted by one sermon preached by Peter.

“ Jesus, the name high over all

“ In hell, or earth, or sky !

“ Angels and men before it fall,

“ And devils fear and fly.

“ Jesus, the Name to sinners dear,

“ The Name to sinners given !

“ It scatters all their guilty fear ;

“ It turns their hell to heaven.”

In Mr. Wesley's Life we learn, that plain men, without any pretension to learning or great talents, have, by preaching Christ crucified from a real heart-felt love to Christ, and to their fellow-creatures, seen their labours attended with the most wonderful effects ; sinners have been first pricked to the heart, and after that have been enabled to believe to the salvation of their souls, and have ever after lived so as to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things ; so that the world have taken knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. The life that they

they henceforth lived was by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them, to redeem them from this present evil world, and hereafter from the wrath of God, which is ready to be manifested against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

“ Jesus the prisoner's fetters breaks,  
“ And bruises Satan's head;  
“ Power into strengthless souls it speaks,  
“ And life into the dead.

“ His only righteousness they shew.  
“ His saving faith proclaim:  
“ 'Tis all their business here below,  
“ To cry, Behold the Lamb!”

Thus does God by the foolishness of preaching save them that believe. By this “ foolish preaching,” as it is called by the world, the hearts and lives of thousands and tens of thousands have been totally changed; drunkards became sober; adulterers became chaste; the covetous were made liberal; the extravagant, careful; and the most ignorant were made wise unto salvation, and able to give a rational account of the religion of Christ; the brutish were civilized; the passionate were made gentle; the proud were made humble and meek; the cruel and hardhearted were made merciful and tenderhearted; the unjust became just in all their dealings; slanderers and backbiters were made partakers of that love that thinketh no evil, hopeth all things, believeth all things, and covereth a multitude of the sins of others; the selfish churl became friendly; liars spoke the truth; blasphemers became adorers of God; thieves provided things honest in the sight of all men; rebels became loyal, and prayed for the King and all in authority; smugglers, and their encouragers, learned to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; sabbath-breakers learned to spend that day in religious worship and

13 pious

pious exercises; the idle became industrious. In short, like the apostles, they turned the world upside down, knowledge arose out of ignorance, order out of confusion, light out of darkness, happiness out of misery, heaven out of hell.

Who can reflect on these wonderful changes without acknowledging that this must be the work of God? The powers of earth and hell have a thousand times been stirred up against this work in vain. The gates of hell have not been able to prevail against it. It has increased, is increasing, and God grant that it may never be diminished, but increased a thousand fold.

What says my old friend to all this? Will you also be his disciple? Methinks I hear you say, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Methodist.

" O that the world might taste and see

" The riches of his grace !

" The arms of love that compass me,

" Would all mankind embrace.

" O that my Jesu's heavenly charms

" Might every bosom move!

" Fly, sinners, fly into the arms

" Of everlasting Love."

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.



## LETTER XXVII.

Be useful where thou livest, that they may  
 Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still.  
 ——— Find out men's wants and will,  
 And meet them there. All worldly joys are less  
 Than this one joy of doing kindnesses.

HERBERT.

Yet, had his aspect nothing of severe,  
 But such a face as promis'd him sincere,  
 Nothing reserv'd or sullen was to see:  
 But sweet regards ; and pleasing sanctity:  
 Mild was his accent, and his action free.

GOOD PARSON.

" The weary and burthen'd, the reprobate race ;  
 " All wait to be pardon'd, thro' Jesus's grace.  
 " In Jesu's compassion the sick find a cure:  
 " And gospel salvation is preach'd to the poor."

DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING those serious views of sacred subjects, I was more than ever desirous that the poor ignorant, thoughtless people in my neighbourhood should be awakened and made sensible of their dreadful state ; but how to effect this I was at a loss : for in giving away the religious tracts, I found that some of the farmers and their children, and also three fourths of the poor, could not read ; that some of the farmers hated the clergy on the score of tythes ; so that some of those that now and then went to church were not likely to receive benefit from those they hated. Others of them would neither go to church themselves nor let their families go. Many of the poor also lived in the total neglect of all public worship ; and spent the sabbath, some in alehouses, others at pitch-and-toss, fives, and other games ; some in gossiping near each other's cottages, sometimes quarrelling, generally cursing, swearing, talking obscenely, &c. others employed  
 I 4 that

that day in going from one farmer to another to look at and take jobs of work.

Such as do go to church, the service being but once in the day, spend the other part of the day in the manner mentioned above. Nor do the farmers in general observe the sabbath any better than the poor; their time is often taken up in shewing their cattle, sheep, hogs, &c. to butchers; in letting jobs of work; in viewing the work that has been done in the week, or in pointing out what is to be done the week ensuing; in visiting each other, and making merry, &c. Our church-yard is called the market. Here, before and after the service, they talk over the prices that their goods sold for in the week past, and what they intend to sell for the next week.

I was also affected to see the children of the poor brought up in ignorance and vice. About four years since I and a few of my neighbours began a Sunday and day school, yet we found that some could not be prevailed upon to send their children to it, and the few that do come are so corrupted by the wicked examples which are set them by their parents, and other children, that very little good is to be expected from that quarter.

After much serious reflection on this general disregard of religion, and moral depravity, I resolved, if possible, to get some of Mr. Wesley's preachers to come and preach to them. After having been separated from them between twenty and thirty years, and having laughed at and ridiculed them, you may suppose that my feelings on this occasion were not very pleasant; but I knew that they had learned of their divine Master to return good for evil, and that they also went about doing good, and made it the grand business of their lives to warn sinners to fly from the wrath to come; so that at last I went to Thornbury and found out a gentleman who is a member of their small society there, and desired that the next preacher that came there would do me the favour of calling on me. On Saturday, the 1st of  
October,

October, 1803, Mr. Ward, one of the preachers in the Dursley circuit, paid me a visit. To this excellent young man I communicated my concern for the stupid, poor unhappy wretches around me; and although he had to preach three times the next day, at nine in the morning and at half past five in the evening at Thornbury, and at Elberton, three or four miles from Thornbury, at two; and although his health is so much impaired by preaching, that it was lately thought that he never would be able to preach more; yet this kind-hearted young man cheerfully agreed to, and did preach on a Common called Alveston-Down, a quarter of a mile from my house, at eleven o'clock, to about sixty or seventy people, small and great. All were still and attentive. Mrs. L. conversed with some of them afterwards, who expressed thankfulness for having heard a sermon that they could understand, as they said that they could not understand the sermons at church, because there were so many fine words in them. Blessed be God the poor have the gospel preached unto them, in a way that they can understand, in a thousand places in England. And here also, I cannot help remarking, that even while I was an infidel, I often regretted that the clergy did not adapt their discourses to the capacities of their hearers; as I have found that many of the farmers, and most of the poor, know very little of what they have ever heard preached in most of their parish churches. I am very confident that not one tenth part of country congregations are able to understand what they hear preached. What a pity it is that the clergy, particularly such as live in the country, do not, in their compositions, imitate the fine, plain language of the Common-prayer-book. But to return from this digression.

That I should again hear a Methodist preacher under a hedge was matter of surprise; but what was much more surprising, the preacher gave notice that there would be preaching in my house on the

evening of the Friday se'nnight following. This affair has been, and is still, the subject of conversation for many miles around. Letters to various parts of England and Wales have spread this extraordinary news nearly through the kingdom. Perhaps you will be a little surprised when I inform you that Mrs. L. on the evening before, went about three miles round part of the parish, calling at every cottage in her way, to inform them that a sermon would be preached on the Down the next morning. With this information the poor people were much pleased, and promised her to be there. Mrs. L. also attended the sermon. It was the first time she ever heard preaching out of a church. She was, however, much pleased to hear such an excellent discourse, and one so well adapted to the understandings of the hearers. Mr. Ward, the preacher, is not quite three and twenty years of age, and if he continues to preach as much as he has done for three years past, I fear that he will not live to be much older. But he is so zealous in his Master's cause, so intent on bringing poor lost sinners to Christ, that he cares but little about his body. He is one of Madeley, where Mr. Fletcher was vicar; and although he was not converted under his preaching, yet he appears to partake much of the same spirit that actuated that extraordinary servant of God. I also heard Mr. Ward that day at nine o'clock in the morning, and at half past five in the evening, in Mr. Wesley's chapel in Thornbury. All his sermons were excellent; and I found *it was good to be there.*

I believe we should have had a much larger congregation on the Down, had not about five hundred volunteers been at that time exercising about half a mile from where Mr. Ward preached.

To break the Sabbath seems to be a wrong way to conquer our enemies. Our churches are nearly empty at those times; as the people of all descriptions are drawn to the place of exercise. There, cakes, gingerbread, &c, are hawked about for sale;



so that it appears more like a fair day, than the Lord's day.

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XXVIII.

Man! know thyself. All wisdom centres there;  
 Angels that grandeur, Men o'erlook, admire.  
 How long shall Human Nature be their Book,  
 Degen'rate Mortal! and unread by thee?  
 The beam dim *Reason* sheds shews wonders There;  
 What high Contents! Illustrious Faculties!  
 But the grand *Comment*, which displays at Full  
 Our Human Height, scarce sever'd from Divine  
 By Heaven compos'd, was publish'd on the *Cross*.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

"Vain Man! thy wisdom folly own,  
 "Lost is thy Reason's feeble ray."

DEAR FRIEND,

NOTWITHSTANDING all that I have said against the Methodists in the Memoirs of my Life, an impartial observer may see, even from my own account, that those people were of very great benefit to me. The very great alteration which took place in my life after I first heard them preach must have been remarked. Before that time I was a thoughtless, careless, wicked boy: from that hour I was totally changed. I then was anxious to learn to read, and it was not long before I constantly read ten chapters in the bible every day. I also read and learned hymns, and religious tracts. For about five years I lived a very religious life, but through inexperience, I was overcome and carried away by the dissipated scenes of a contested election. After having lived a year in vice, by only once hear-

ing Mr. Wesley preach, I was effectually prevailed upon to renounce my sinful practices, and was enabled to live in the fear of God. About two years after, I married a very pious woman of Mr. Wesley's Society : and in the midst of great affliction, which involved us in great poverty also, I was not only contented, but frequently experienced such a happiness in my mind, as often rose even to raptures. We had been married only about four years, when this excellent woman died, in the full assurance of hope.—Although during my wife's illness and death, I lay in a state that was thought to be past recovery, yet even in this situation I was so happy as even to astonish some who visited me.

The readers of my Life may also recollect that the Methodists visited me and my wife during this great affliction ; and, my business being at a stand, (in consequence of my having no one to attend to my customers,) they lent me money to defray the expences incurred during my long illness, and locked up my shop, to prevent me from being plundered of all I had. I might also mention many other favours that I received from them, which made me say in my Life, that they were “ in general a friendly, honest-hearted, sincere people.”

I perhaps ought also to observe, that if I had never heard the Methodists preach, in all probability I should have been at this time a poor, ragged, dirty cobbler, peeping out from under a bulk with a snuffy nose and a long beard ; for it was by their preaching that I was taught to call upon God for his grace to enable me to turn from my vicious course of life, and through which I became a real Christian. It was by their means also, that I was excited to improve a little my intellectual faculties. It was through them that I got an amiable helpmeet in my first wife ; and she likewise will have reason to all eternity to remember the Methodists with gratitude, for having been the instruments of her conversion ; for before she heard them preach she had not even  
the

the form of godliness, much less the power of it. It was also through them that I got the shop in which I first set up for a bookseller. It is very likely, that had I never heard these people, I should have now been an old drunken, debauched fellow, like the generality of journeymen shoemakers; and it is well known, that many, very many instances of the same kind might be adduced; great numbers by being connected with them have learned to be industrious and frugal, by which means they have been enabled to live in credit, to provide something for their children, and to support themselves in their old age.

In my Memoirs, although I have acknowledged that there are many sensible people among the Methodists, yet I have represented many of them as very ignorant. The reason why I thought and represented them as such is very evident; the more any people are influenced by religion, the more do they live *as strangers and pilgrims upon the earth*, the more they have *respect to the recompence of reward, the more do they see him that is invisible*. The more they possess of the life of God in the soul, the greater is their confidence in the providence of God over their temporal concerns. In proportion as they thus live and act, the more ignorant do they appear to the world in general, and to infidels in particular. So that in fact, the more any persons increase in the filial *fear of the Lord*, which, if Solomon was a judge, is real wisdom; the more they increase in that wisdom which is from above; the more they are taught of God, the more ignorant and foolish do they appear to infidels and men of the world, who in their generation are wiser than the children of light.

That many ignorant people have from the beginning to the present time, joined the Methodists, has never been denied. *I thank thee, O Father, saith Christ, that thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,*  
even

*even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. You see, saith St. Paul, your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men [philosophers] after the flesh; not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world.* The preaching of the doctrines of the Cross for the reformation and salvation of mankind, was from the beginning thought to be foolishness to the philosophers, and moral declaimers. *Where is the wise?* or the philosophers that read lectures of morality? *Where is the Scribe?* he that all his life has studied the Mosaic Law? *Where is the disputer of this world?* the searcher into the secrets of nature? Hath not God shewn that all their wisdom is foolishness, and ineffectual in the important work of reforming mankind? May it not be with truth asserted, that honest John Nelson,\* the Methodist Preacher, did, by preaching Christ crucified, reform more hardened sinners, than were ever reformed by all the moral lectures that were ever read to mankind? In St. Paul's days the wise were confounded on seeing the wonderful effects that were produced by the preaching of a few plain men, whom they termed fools, because they wanted the learning of the age. Mr. Wesley says,

So wretched and obscure,  
The men whom ye despise,  
So foolish, impotent, and poor,  
Above your scorn we rise.  
We through the Holy Ghost,  
Can witness better things,  
For he whose blood is all our boast,  
Hath made us priests and kings.

That Mr. Wesley's people are a comparatively ignorant people I am fully convinced is not true; that the reverse is the fact may be easily shewn. I will begin with the Preachers. I suppose all must admit that

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\* See John Nelson's Journal.



that Mr. Wesley was a sensible, learned man. His brother Charles also possessed considerable abilities, and was likewise a learned man. Some of their Preachers are also learned men; others of them have great natural abilities; and if we take the whole body of Preachers together, they will be found to be well versed in the theory as well as practical part of Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament. And although there is reason to believe, from the effects produced by their preaching, that they are assisted by the Spirit of God, yet they also know that it is their duty to read and study; and this duty Mr. Wesley strongly enforced and insisted upon, when he met them in their Conferences, as appears by the Minutes of these Conferences. And as those Preachers have experienced the power of religion, and live under its influence, it must be allowed, that they are far better qualified to preach the gospel than some others who take upon them that sacred office. If you are desirous to see more on the subject of laymen preaching, read Mr. Wesley's Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part 3rd. and his excellent Sermon on *Heb. v. 4. And no man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* In those tracts he has clearly proved, that the Jews, the primitive Church, the Church of England, and other Churches, allowed men to preach that were not priests, nor in holy orders.

But to return. As to the members in general of the Methodist Society, I never saw any better informed in religious matters. They are better acquainted with the Bible, and with the nature and design of Christianity, than any people I know. The comparison is particularly striking among the poorer sort. In those parts of the kingdom where Methodism has long been established, you will find that the poorest Methodist is able to give you a rational and scriptural account of the effects of the grace of God on the soul; is well acquainted with the nature  
of

of the threatenings and promises contained in the word of God, and knows what he has to hope and fear. I think it is Addison who observes, that religion has a very great tendency to enlarge the intellectual faculties of man: as the Methodists do not waste their time in idleness and diversions, they have more time to read than others; they also hear many sermons preached by men of various talents amongst themselves; and many of them strictly attend the service at Church: they also associate, converse with, and improve one another. So that the difference in degree of knowledge between the poor Methodists and the poor in general, is very remarkable. Mr. Addison justly remarks, that, "The most illiterate man who is touched with devotion, and uses frequent exercises of it, contracts a certain greatness of mind, mingled with a noble simplicity, that raises him above those of the same condition; and there is an indelible mark of goodness in those who sincerely possess it. It is hardly possible it should be otherwise; for the fervors of a pious mind will naturally contract such an earnestness and attention towards a better Being, as will make the ordinary passages of life go off with a becoming indifference. By this a man in the lowest condition will not appear mean."——But to a *carnal* mind their knowledge of the things of God appears *to be foolishness*, and the greatest realities are thought to be only whims. Spiritual things can only be discerned by one that is spiritually minded.

"The things unknown to feeble sense,  
"Unseen by reason's glimmering ray,  
"With strong commanding evidence,  
"Their heavenly origin display.

"Faith lends his realizing light,  
"The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;  
"Th' Invisible appears in sight,  
"And God is seen by mortal eye."

I am, dear friend, your's.

LETTER

## LETTER XXIX.

“ Ah, Lord, with trembling I confess,  
 “ A gracious soul may fall from grace !  
 “ The salt may lose its seasoning power,  
 “ And never, never find it more.

“ Lest that my fearful case should be,  
 “ Each moment knit my soul to Thee ;  
 “ And lead me to the mount above,  
 “ Thro’ the low vale of humble love.”

DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN I look into my Memoirs I shudder to see what I have done. I have wantonly treated of, and sported with the most solemn and precious truths of the gospel. O God, lay not this sin to my charge ! Other infidels have obscured, as much as they were able, the external evidences of Christianity ; but I made a thrust at its vital part. There are many thousands who never had time or opportunity, or who have been, somehow or other, prevented from investigating the external evidences of the Christian religion, who yet are as much assured of its divine authority as they are of their own existence. *They know that Christ is come in the flesh ; that they are born of God ; that they are passed from death unto life ; that they were once blind, that now they see ; that old things are done away, and all things are become new ; that they were once miserable, but are now happy ; they once were without God in the world, but now by that faith which is the operation of God, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, by this precious faith, they can say my Father and my God. They can call Christ Lord by the Holy Ghost.. They know what is the communion of saints, and often sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and are filled with the fulness of God ; and they know that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved*

*dissolved they have a building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

It was this internal evidence which made the martyrs triumph in the midst of the flames; and this evidence, neither the pretended friends, nor the open enemies of Christianity, will ever be able to destroy. Christianity, without this, is a body without a soul. And all those who endeavour to invalidate this internal evidence, are *blind, knowing nothing*; are *false spies that bring an evil report of the good land*; they are in the *gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity*, and have neither part nor lot in the matter; and, sooner or later, they will be found to be *fighters against God*.

Jesu, vouchsafe a pitying ray,  
Be thou my guide, be thou my way,  
To glorious happiness!  
Ah! write the pardon on my heart,  
And whensoe'er I hence depart,  
Let me depart in peace.

I suppose you are ready to ask, how it was possible for me, who *once was enlightened, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*; how it was possible for me to sink into ignorance, blindness, and infidelity? Ah, my friend, nothing is more easy. As a real Christian is one that has been *called out of darkness into marvelous light*; so, as long as *his eye is single, his soul is full of light, and he walks in the light, as God is in the light, and in him is no darkness at all*; yet, if he turn back again into Egypt, he will again be involved in Egyptian darkness. The sun of righteousness will no longer shine upon him. Adam, as soon as he disobeyed his God, at once lost his favour and likeness, and sunk into a state of darkness and ignorance, and attempted to hide himself from the all-seeing eye amongst the trees. And when a renewed soul falls again into a course of sin, he is at last *smitten with blindness, and he gropes*  
but



*but cannot find the door. The candle of the Lord no more shines upon his head. They are blind, and cannot see afar off; and have forgot that they were purged from their sins. They will curse, and swear that they know not the man. As they did not like to retain the knowledge of God, he gives them over to blindness and hardness of heart. They have quenched the Spirit, and done despite unto it. They no longer know the things which belong to their peace, they being hid from their eyes. They have eyes that see not, and ears that hear not.*

This evidence I have attempted to invalidate. God be merciful to me a sinner!

Jesus, let thy pitying eye  
Call back a wandering sheep:  
False to thee, like Peter, I  
Would fain like Peter weep.

Let me be by grace restor'd;  
On me be all long-suffering shewn,  
Turn, and look upon me, Lord,  
And break my heart of stone.

I have, in my "Life," said that the Methodists have driven people out of their mind, made them commit suicide, &c. But I solemnly declare that *I never knew an instance of the kind from my own personal knowledge.* I have seen it asserted in pamphlets wrote against them, and also in newspapers, and I have been told that such things have happened; and upon such kind of evidence I have shamefully followed others in relating those stories after them.

In finding fault with the Methodist preachers for endeavouring to awaken all such as were never converted, every one may see that in blaming them I also blamed the prophets, Christ and his apostles, and also the Church of England, and most other reformed churches. The Methodist preachers often tell their hearers, in the words of our Church in her

9th

9th Article, That *every man is far gone from original righteousness; is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore every person born into the world deserveth God's wrath and damnation.* What the Methodists mean by conviction for sin is the same as our Church has set down in the communion service: *We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; and the burthen is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life.* That which displeases the infidels and pretended Christians on this head is, the Methodists insist on the necessity of *feeling* what we repeat, lest we be found solemn mockers of God.

In the scripture this conviction is called, being pricked to the heart, under which sinners are constrained to inquire, *What shall we do to be saved? To cry, God be merciful to me a sinner, &c.* And under this conviction David roared for the disquietude of his soul, and watered his bed with his tears. Jeremiah saith, *Be not a terror to me.* In another place God says, *I will make thee a terror to thyself.* Solomon says, *The spirit of a man may sustain his [bodily] infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear.* This is what is intended by a *contrite spirit, a broken heart, &c.*

So that what I have pointed out as a dreadful state is, I presume, quite scriptural; and must be, more or less, felt by every person before he will see the necessity of coming to Christ for pardon and *salvation*; before he can be born again, or converted; or before he can be justified, as St. Paul says, and as our Church says also, before he ever can be changed by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; before he can perfectly love God, or worthily magnify his holy name.

But

But as an infidel I cared for none of these things, and so ridiculed them all. The remembrance of which has in *reality* been to me grievous, and the burthen intolerable! May Almighty God make all the inventors, and other wanton relaters of such stories, feel, before it is too late, the same sorrow and sincere repentance! and may they also obtain mercy through the all-atoning blood of Christ, who forgiveth *all manner of sins and blasphemies* of such as truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel.

- " After all that I have done,
- " Saviour, art thou pacify'd?
- " Whither shall my vileness run?
- " Hide me, earth, the sinner hide!
- " Let me sink into the dust,
- " Full of holy shame adore!
- " Jesus Christ, the Good, the Just,
- " Bids me go and sin no more.
  
- " O, confirm the gracious word,
- " Jesus, Son of God and Man!
- " Let me never grieve thee, Lord,
- " Never turn to sin again!—
- " Till all in all thou art!
- " Till thou bring thy nature in,
- " Keep this feeble, trembling heart,
- " Save me, save me, Lord, from sin."

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

## LETTER XXX.

Grasp the whole world of reason, life and sense,  
 In one close system of benevolence:  
 Happier as kinder, in whate'er degree,  
 And height of bliss, but height of charity.

POPE.

————— The grave, dread thing!  
 Men shudder when thou'rt nam'd: Nature apall'd  
 Shakes off her wonted firmness.—Ah! how dark.—

BLAIR.

“ Let us join, ('tis God commands,)  
 “ Let us join our hearts and hands;  
 “ Help to gain our calling's hope,  
 “ Build we each the other up.”

DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE represented some of the Methodists as troublesome obtruders on the sick and dying; so that I think I ought to set this matter in a clear light.

Mr. Wesley's people think that they cannot *love their neighbour as themselves*, without endeavouring to find out every possible way by which they may be serviceable to the souls and bodies of their fellow creatures. In London and Bristol, and I believe in other places, some of their society who are able to pray, instruct, and exhort, endeavour to find out poor distressed objects who are confined to their beds by diseases in poor-houses, prisons, lodging-houses, dirty lanes, alleys, &c. Those poor forsaken outcasts of society they instruct, exhort, pray with, &c. To objects most in want they give money. Perhaps there cannot be any labour of love more praiseworthy, or more deserving of encouragement, as great numbers of such poor destitute wretches may at all times be found languishing in a forlorn state, and generally die without any one caring any thing about them: for none but such as are filled with



with the love of God and man will ever go into such loathsome places and habitations. I formerly accompanied some of those loving people in this work of mercy, and have witnessed their cheerful performance of this great duty; which to a poor, selfish, unregenerate heart would be intolerable. But no labour, however disagreeable or hazardous to health or life, is too much to be performed by such as are thoroughly impressed with the worth of an immortal soul; who are persuaded that *Christ tasted death for every man*, and *would that every man should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved*. While they were employed in this solemn work, if they could discover any poor creature that gave them reason to hope for his conversion, O, what love and joy warmed every heart! The Devil knew that *Job did not serve God for naught*. Christ still pays his servants well for every thing they do in his name and for his sake. Those people, when employed in such work as this, which to flesh and blood is not only irksome but shocking, yet would not have exchanged the pleasure which they found in it for any earthly enjoyment. To return to the subject.

It is not only in cities and large towns that the poor die unvisited; but also in many country towns, villages, &c. In the places where I have lived in the former part of my life, and where I have had a country-house, or in the various villages round my present residence, I do not recollect any poor person who had sent for a clergyman on such an occasion, or of any clergyman that went unsent for. Those poor creatures generally die as stupid and careless as they have lived. When any one of them has any concern about his immortal part, he is afraid to give trouble to the vicar or curate, and ashamed to let them witness his poverty and rags. Christ well knew the deplorable state of such poor creatures, and has graciously promised to reward all such as explore their dreary abodes. But as an infidel, I thought all talk about heaven and hell, praying for  
them,

them, &c. useless and terrifying ; for which reason I exclaimed against such as performed those kind offices. And I recollect that when, about twenty years since, I was thought to be near death, I was so hardened as not to suffer any clergyman to come near me, or any other religious person.

Wearied of wandering from my God,  
And now made willing to return,  
I hear, and bow me to the rod ;  
For thee, not without hope, I mourn ;  
I have an Advocate above,  
A Friend before the throne of love.

O, Jesus ! full of truth and grace,  
More full of grace than I of sin ;  
Yet once again I seek thy face,  
Open thy arms and take me in ;  
And freely my backslidings heal,  
And love the faithless sinner still.

That an avowed unbeliever should refuse to accept any spiritual advice, and not suffer any prayers to be put up for him when about to quit the world, is not very surprising. But I am persuaded that there have been, and still are, very many who call themselves Christians, who when thought to be on the borders of the invisible world, would not have one word said to them of their real state, much less would they bear any religious advice, or join in prayer. And yet perhaps those very people were such as put off repentance to a sick or death-bed, not considering that the longer they continue in sin the more callous they are made, and that the consciences of many are at last *scared* as it were *with a hot iron*.

“ Dead already, dead within,  
“ Spiritually dead in sin ;  
“ Dead to God while here they breathe,  
“ Panting after second death,  
“ They will still in sin remain,  
“ Greedy of eternal pain.”

Yet

You no doubt recollect that I have also ridiculed the private meetings established by Mr. Wesley among his people. Nor is it at all surprising that a free-thinker should hate every means of grace, particularly such as have so great a tendency to keep the children of God together, and to promote all inward and outward holiness. I will transcribe Mr. Wesley's account of the origin of his classes in London, March 1742. "I appointed, (says Mr. Wesley) several earnest, sensible men to meet me, to whom I shewed the great difficulty I had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under my care. After much discourse they all agreed there could be no better way to come to a sure knowledge of each person than to divide them into classes, under the inspection of those in whom I could confide. This was the origin of classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God, the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest." The person appointed to watch these little classes was called the *leader* of that class to which he received his appointment. Mr. Wesley called the *leaders* together, and desired that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those he saw weekly. They did so; and many disorderly walkers were detected. Some were turned from the evil of their ways; and some put out of the society. And the rest saw it with fear, and rejoiced in God with reverence. At first the *leaders* visited each person at their own house; but this was soon found inexpedient. It required more time than the leaders had to spare. Many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, where they could not be visited. And where misunderstandings had arisen between persons in the same class it was more convenient to see them face to face. On these, and some other considerations, it was agreed, that each leader should meet his class all together, once a week, at a time and place most convenient for the whole.

whole. He begun and ended the meeting with singing and prayer; and spent about an hour in conversing with these persons, one by one. By this means, a more full inquiry was made into the behaviour of every person; advice or reproof was given as need required; misunderstandings were removed; and brotherly love promoted. "It can scarce be conceived, (says Mr. Wesley,) what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many experienced that Christian fellowship, of which they had not so much as an idea before. They begun to *bear one another's burthens*, and *naturally to care for each other's welfare*. And as they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for each other." Mr. *Wesley* further adds, "Upon reflection I could not but observe, this is the very thing which was from the very beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God had sent forth to *preach the gospel to every creature*, and the body of hearers, were mostly Jews or Heathens; but as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth as to forsake sin, and seek the gospel of salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met those *Catechumens*, as they were then called, apart from the congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them and for them, according to their several necessities."

Perhaps the following hymn, which they often sing in those meetings, will enable you to form some idea of the temper and spirit by which they are actuated:

Christ, from whom all blessings flow,  
 Perfecting the saints below,  
 Hear us, who thy nature share,  
 Who thy mystic body are:  
 Join us in one spirit join,  
 Let us still receive of thine:

Still



Still for more on thee we call,  
Thou who fillest all in all!

Closer knit to thee our Head,  
Nourish us, O, Christ, and feed;  
Let us daily growth receive,  
More and more in Jesus live.  
Jesus, we thy members are:  
Cherish us with kindest care:  
Of thy flesh and of thy bone;  
Love, for ever love thy own.

Move and actuate, and guide:  
Divers gifts to each divide:  
Plac'd according to thy will,  
Let us all our work fulfil,  
Never from our office move:  
Needful to each other prove:  
Use the grace on each bestow'd,  
Temper'd by the art of God.

Sweetly may we all agree,  
Touch'd with softest sympathy:  
Kindly for each other care;  
Every member feel its share.  
Wounded by the grief of one,  
Now let all the members groan:  
Honour'd if one member is,  
All partake the common bliss.

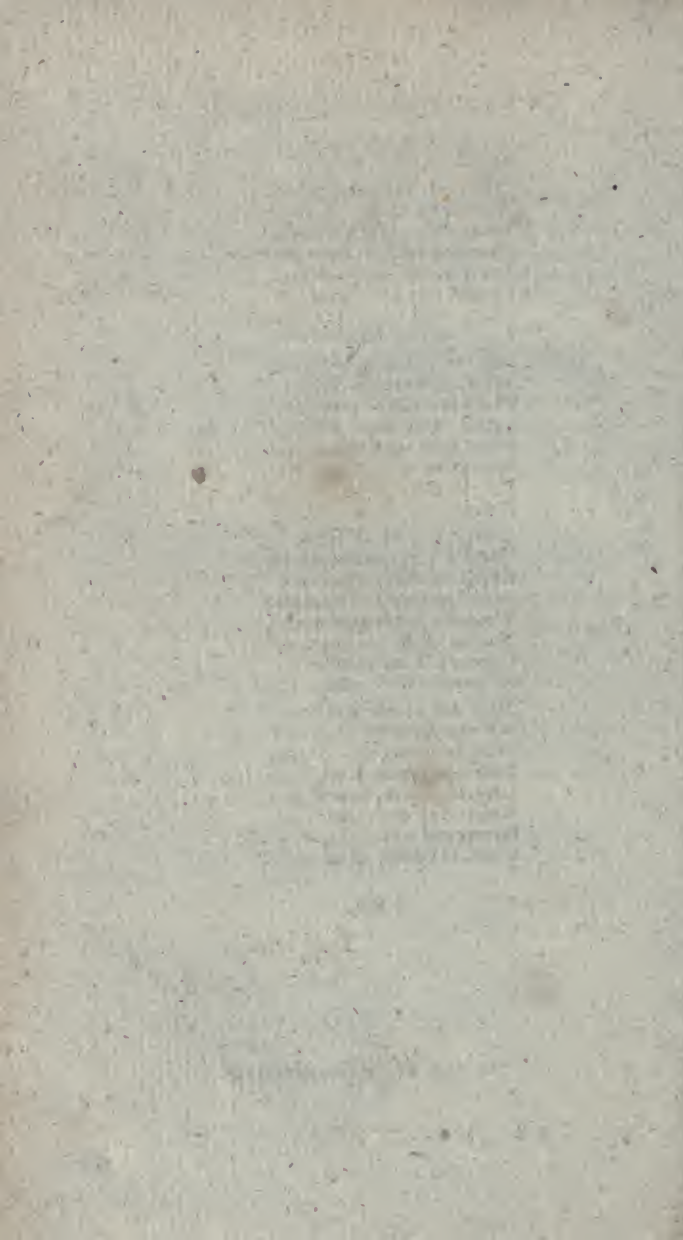
Many are we now and one,  
We who Jesus have put on:  
There is neither bond or free,  
Male nor female, Lord, in thee!  
Love, like death, has all destroy'd,  
Render'd all distinction void!  
Names and sects and parties fall!  
Thou, O Christ, art all in all!

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

THE END OF THE CONFESSIONS.



TWO LETTERS,  
ON THE  
BAD CONSEQUENCES  
OF HAVING  
DAUGHTERS EDUCATED  
AT  
BOARDING-SCHOOLS.





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## TWO LETTERS, &c.

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### LETTER I.

" 'Tis education forms the tender mind:  
" Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclin'd."

" Old maids are wretched; without husbands, children,  
" Or any of those ties which sweeten life—  
" In grief and sorrow must they spend their days."

—— I rap loudly at your gilded doors,  
Ye female guides, that lead our lambs astray;  
And bid you be at home, ye thoughtless dames,  
Who leave your offspring with the hungry wolf.

HURDIS.

" This would be my wish, could I  
" Such bitter curse allow,  
" Let those I hate have spirits high,  
" With fortunes that are low."

" 'Tis nobly great to dare to be  
" No greater than we are."

DEAR FRIEND,

DURING the fortnight that I spent  
with my friend Dick Thrifty, I could not help ex-  
pressing

pressing my surprise and regret on seeing so large a number of single ladies in that and other neighbouring villages.

"I am not at all surprised at it (said Dick), but rather wonder that more of them are not ruined; it is only the very retired situations in which they live that saves them. As to their getting husbands, that is out of the question, as I am persuaded not one in ten of them will ever be led to the altar. The young men of their rank generally go abroad, or to sea, or get into the army; for had they stayed at home and married they must have starved.

"Those single ladies (continued Dick), are the daughters of clergymen, of officers of the army and navy, or of attornies, apothecaries, &c. A few of them are daughters of gentlemen of very small fortunes. Many of those *would-be* ladies have not a hundred a year, some of them not fifty pounds a year to live on; and yet they have been brought up in idleness, and taught to consider themselves *ladies*. Many of them are almost totally unacquainted with every thing worth knowing; they live an half-starved life, and, when they can, cheat at cards to help out their small pittance; their time is employed in altering their gowns, hats, &c. to the whim of the day, in reading novels, in gossiping and spreading scandal from house to house, &c. Now (said my friend), I presume you no longer wonder to see them single. Many of them are growing grey, and are envious at all those they see married and happy. Others of them are getting into the *yellow leaf*; and although some of them are young and blooming, I cannot help looking upon them with great concern, and execrating the stupid pride and ignorance of their parents, who, by the manner of bringing them up, have excluded them from the endearing relations and unspeakable pleasures of wives and mothers.

"How

“ How does the blood, thro’ every vein,  
 “ Run thrilling to the mother’s heart ;  
 “ When she beholds the boy maintain,  
 “ In the boy’s sport, the father’s part.

“ How does her bosom pant, to read  
 “ In every part some likeness caught ;  
 “ Some semblance of his father’s deed :  
 “ Some copy of his mother’s thought !

I cannot help inserting the following description of a loving couple at dinner :

Now o’er a single chicken, *tete-a-tete*,  
 Two sweethearts coo ; a turtle and his mate :  
 Love all their converse, and all thought supplies,  
 And e’en the single chick neglected lies.

BISHOP.

I must also give you a few lines from the *Family Fireside* of the same author, who was many years a customer of mine. I believe he was an excellent husband, and had an extraordinary good wife.

——— Love, by friendship mellow’d into bliss,  
 Lights the glad glow, and sanctifies the kiss,  
 When fondly welcom’d to the accustom’d seat,  
 In sweet complaisance wife and husband meet ;  
 Look mutual pleasure, mutual purpose share,  
 Repose from labour, but unite in care.

BISHOP.

Dick went on. “ Those girls should have been obliged to do the work of the servant maids in their respective families, by which means some additions might have been made to their fortunes ; and, what is still of much more importance, they would have acquired habits of industry, healthy and strong constitutions, and would have been a thousand times more happy, it being morally impossible for an idle person to be happy.”

- " See where poor Indolence reclines!
- " Lolls, tumbles, stretches, sprawls, and pines!
- " Life has no pains like that she feels;
- " A thousand racks, a thousand wheels,
- " In shape of easy-chairs, pursue
- " The wretch—who knows not what to do."

Gilpin, in his 42d sermon, says, " Avoid idleness; and always have your minds intent on business, or on something useful. Idleness is the nurse of vice. They who mind their business the best are in general the best men. The devil first tempts you to be idle. The idle person is every man's property. Bad company is always at hand. Where idleness inhabits they resort. Here they corrupt; and here they are corrupted. The contagion spreads; and every bad consequence follows."

Baxter says, that " the Devil tempts industrious people; but idle people tempt the Devil."

*Leisure* is Pain; takes off our chariot-wheels;  
 How heavily we drag the Load of Life!  
 Blest Leisure is our Curse; like that of Cain,  
 It makes us wander; wander earth around  
 To fly that Tyrant, *Thought*. As *Atlas* groan'd  
 The World beneath, we groan beneath an Hour.  
 We cry for mercy to the next amusement;  
 The next amusement mortgages our fields!  
 Slight inconvenience! Prisons hardly frown,  
 From hateful *Time*, if prisons set us free.  
 Yet when *Death* kindly tenders us relief,  
 We call him cruel; Years to moments shrink,  
 Ages to years. The telescope is turn'd  
 To man's false Optics, (by his folly false.)  
*Time*, in advance, behind him hides his wings,  
 And seems to creep decrepid with his age:  
 Behold him, when past by; what then is seen.  
 But his broad pinions swifter than the winds?  
 And all Mankind, in contradiction strong,  
 Rueful, aghast! cry out on his career.  
 Leave to thy foes these errors, and these ills;  
 To Nature just their *cause* and *cure* explore.  
 Not short Heav'n's bounty, boundless our Expence;  
 No niggard, Nature; Men are prodigals.

We



We waste, (not use) our time ; we breathe, not live.  
 Time wasted, is *Existence*, us'd is Life.  
 And bare existence, Man to live ordain'd,  
 Wrings and oppresses with enormous Weight.  
 And why ? since Time was given for use, not waste.  
 Injoin'd to fly ; with tempest, tide, and stars,  
 To keep his speed, nor ever wait for man ;  
 Time us'd was doom'd a pleasure, waste a pain ;  
 That man might *feel* his Error, if unseen ;  
 And feeling fly to labour for his cure ;  
 Not blundering split on idleness for ease.  
 Life's cares are comforts, such by heav'n design'd ;  
 He that has none, must make them, or be wretched.  
 Cares are employments ; and without employ  
 The soul is on the Rack ; the rack of rest,  
 To souls most adverse ; action all their joy.

Here, then, the riddle, mark'd above unfolds ;  
 Then time torments, when man turns fool.

————— The Man who consecrates his hours  
 By vig'rous Effort, and an honest Aim,  
 At once he draws the stings of life and death ;  
 He walks with Nature, and her paths are Peace.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Dick continued. " In families which have more daughters than are necessary to do the work of the house, plain-work, mantua, millinery, and other kinds of women's work should be procured, to prevent any of them from living in idleness ; as industrious habits would make them fit to have families of their own. Girls thus brought up would make proper wives for gentlemen of small fortunes, unbeneficed clergymen, attornies, genteel tradesmen, opulent farmers, &c. As they now are circumstanced every prospect of marriage is excluded. The sons of respectable tradesmen and farmers avoid them, lest their advances should be treated with contempt. They have also a much stronger reason for keeping at a distance ; they well know, that the education and habits of such girls have rendered them entirely unfit for wives for any that have not fortunes to support them in idleness, pride and extravagance. For the same reasons they are unfit

to be partners for curates, and other professional men of small incomes.

“ This stupidity, pride and folly (said Dick) is contagious, and is spreading rapidly in every direction. Many farmers, observing how some, in circumstances inferior to themselves, bring up their daughters, think, that because they can better afford the expence, their girls ought to be brought up as genteelly as their neighbours; so that instead of having them taught to read and write, and do plain-work at a day-school, until they are ten or eleven years old, and then taken home to help milk the cows, &c. they are sent to a boarding-school, where they remain until they are fourteen, or older. There they are called ladies, and learn filigree, pride, and extravagance. When their education is completed, their infatuated parents find themselves despised by their own children, who think themselves ladies, and look with disdain on all they see going forward in the old farm-house. To see their father come in from the fields in his smock-frock, with a pick on his shoulder, is “ monstrous.” To see the butchers and pig-dealers about the house, and by the fireside, bargaining for calves, sheep, hogs, &c. is “ insupportable !” To see their mother with a serge petticoat, woollen-apron, mob-cap, and old hat milking the cows, making butter, cheese, &c. is “ prodigious monstrous.” And when any of their old schoolmates happen to call on them, O, they are ready to expire with shame and vexation, while they hear their mother apologize for her homely dress, &c.

Such girls, instead of being useful in the affairs of the farm-house, &c. are rendered good for nothing; instead of assisting, they expect to be waited upon; to have horses to make their idle visits; and a servant several times a week to exchange novels at the circulating library, which is, perhaps, six, eight, or ten miles off. Their idle, gossiping tea parties

parties must be waited on, even in the midst of harvest, &c.

Much might be added on this head; but I must subscribe myself,

Your's.

## LETTER II.

In vain the virgin's tears,  
Her cries in vain, her pleading pray'r,  
—— Her agonizing woes.

POTTER'S *ÆSCHYLUS*.

—— Hence thou monster, pois'nous bawd,  
Lust's factor, and damnation's orator,  
Gossip of hell; were all harlots' sins  
Which the world contains, number'd together,  
Thine exceeds them all: of all the creatures  
That ever were created, thou art basest.

MARSON.

" Now as they pass, the crowded way shall sound  
" With hissing scorn, and murmur'd detestation;  
" The latest annals shall record their guilt."

— If *Individual Good* engage our hope,  
Domestic Virtues give the largest scope;  
If plans of *Public Eminence* we trace,  
Domestic Virtues are its surest base.——

BISHOP.

DEAR FRIEND,

MY friend Dick continued. " Although pride, extravagance, and idleness, are very great evils indeed; yet bad as they are, they are not the worst that young ladies learn at boarding-schools.

" A short

“A short time since a boarding-school girl was on a visit in the neighbourhood during the Midsummer recess; her conduct was so exceedingly forward, and even indecent, as to put the ladies out of countenance. It being reported that her fortune was very considerable, a tradesman who was an old rake, ran off with her to Gretna-Green, and there married her. I must remark, that she did not desire any female attendant, but went alone with this rake, so many hundred miles. As no stir was made about the affair, the tradesman soon brought her home to his own house; but to his great surprise found that his young wanton wife had but about sixty pounds a-year. This couple being at a tea-party sometime after they had been married, a gentleman jokingly asked her, ‘When she intended returning to school again?’ And added, ‘You will be a knowing scholar.’ She, with an arch look, replied aloud before all the company, ‘O, there are many in the school as knowing as I am.’ In short (said Dick), her conduct was so bad, that all decent ladies avoided her company; nor is she ever permitted to enter the ball-rooms in any of the country-towns in this neighbourhood.

Ye crowded boarding-schools! Are you not apt  
 To taint the infant mind, to point the way  
 To fashionable folly, strew with flow'rs  
 The path of vice, and teach the wayward child  
 Extravagance and pride? Who learns in you  
 To be the prudent wife, the pious mother?  
 To be her parent's staff, or husband's joy?  
 'Tis you dissolve the links that once held fast  
 Domestic happiness. 'Tis you untie  
 The matrimonial knot; 'tis you divide  
 The parent and the child. O! 'tis to you  
 We owe the ruin of our dearest bliss.  
 The *best* instructor of the growing less  
 Is she that bear her. Let *her* first be taught,  
 And she will see the path of virtue smooth  
 With often treading. She can best dispense  
 That frequent medicine the soul requires,  
 And make it grateful to the tongue of youth,

By



By mixture of affection. She can charm  
 When others fail and leave the work undone.  
 She will not taint, for she instructs her own.  
 She will not torture for she feels herself.  
 So education thrives, and the sweet maid  
 Improves in beauty like the shapeless rock  
 Under the sculptor's chissel, till at length  
 She undertakes her progress thro' the world,  
 A woman fair and good, as child for parent,  
 Parent for child, or man for wife could wish.  
 Say, man, what more delights thee than thy fair?  
 What should we not be patient to endure  
 If they command? We rule the noisy world,  
 But they rule us. Then teach them how to guide,  
 And hold the rein with judgment. Their applause  
 May once again restore the quiet reign  
 Of Virtue, Love, and Peace, and yet bring back  
 The blush of folly and the shame of vice.

VILLAGE CURATE.

“ I will (said Dick) give you another instance of the dreadful depravity of boarding-schools.

“ A friend of mine has lately taken his two girls from one of those hotbeds of vice; the eldest of those girls was nearly twelve, and the youngest nearly eleven years old; his motive for taking them from school at so early an age, was to prevent them from being corrupted; but, dreadful as it is to relate, he found, by the depraved conduct of the eldest that she had already been debauched! And it was also discovered by the artless complaints of the youngest, that attempts had also been made upon her; and that she had been ill-treated for not permitting shocking indecencies.

“ After this horrid discovery had been made, my friend (continued Dick) in a letter, remonstrated, and threatened the person that keeps the school. To this letter a very extraordinary answer was returned. (Dick had it by him, and gave it me to read.) It tacitly acknowledged that the girl had been debauched; but, as an excuse, said, that she had been corrupted at a former school two years before. I omit many particulars of this abominable transaction

transaction for the sake of decency, and to spare your feelings,

- “ She’s lost ! She’s gone ! the beauty of the earth ;
- “ All that in woman could be virtue call’d
- “ Is lost ; corrupted are the noble faculties ;
- “ The temper of her soul is quite infected :
- “ Boarding-schools have spotted all her virgin beauties.”

“ I saw also two letters that were for sometime concealed by the girl ; those letters contained the plan and very minute particular directions for carrying on a private correspondence between her and the villain, her seducer.”

The preceding relation of my friend Dick, revives in my mind some similar transactions which happened near town ; the account of which I had from another worthy friend.

A few years since a respectable man, in appearance, of a very genteel profession, which enabled him to live as a gentleman, married a girl of easy virtue. They both acquired a taste for shew and expensive dissipation ; and like too many others, did not stick at any means, however detestable, by which they might be able to support their way of living.

Soon after he had married this woman, he took a large house in a lonely situation, about a mile from a country town, and within a few miles of London ; so that he was enabled to attend to the duties of his profession. This country house he had fitted up as a boarding-school, where young ladies were to be taught many elegant accomplishments, to receive the finishing touches of their education from his accomplished and virtuous wife.

What followed is so shocking that I shudder at the recollection of it, and scarce know how to proceed.

Consummate horror, guilt beyond a name !

BUSIRIS..

This

This villain got acquainted with some old superannuated, debauched wretches, whom he procured to prepare those young innocent creatures ; and this inhuman monster in iniquity and his wife, made it their chief care to debauch their youthful minds by every means in their power. By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and lewd talk, let in defilement to the inward part.

The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Embodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose  
The properties of her first being.

MILTON'S COMUS.

Some of those girls, whose parents or guardians lived at too great a distance to be made acquainted with the dreadful recital, were actually confined in rooms, and nearly starved into a compliance with this miscreant's own brutal passion. I know not how long those horrid transactions were continued ; however, at last the neighbouring town had some notice of what was going on at this school, and the villain, as he drove through in his gig, was hooted. Soon after, some of these half-starved girls escaped from their confinement, and ran into the town and related their shocking tale ! so that the mob got about the school, and would have pulled down the house had not the children been removed.

———— Villain ! O deceitful wretch !  
Couldst thou consent to wrong such innocence ?  
———— Whose form and voice divine,  
Could charm a tyger to forget his prey ;  
Inhuman villain !

DAVY'S LOVE AND AMBITION.

I do not mean to insinuate that there are many such schools as this ; yet, I have good reason to believe that girls are often corrupted even in those which are, upon the whole, well conducted. I was informed some years since, that obscene books find their way into those seminaries, sometimes by means

means of servant girls belonging to the schools; Jews have also been known to fasten them to strings let down from chamber-windows, &c.\*

During the recesses the girls are often corrupted by the abandoned servant maids that now get into most houses. When the children return to their different schools after the holidays, what each heard, or has learned during the vacation, is communicated to the rest. If the school be large, it is ten to one but some of the girls have overheard lewd hints, or discovered something improper, either in the servants, or their brothers, or books, which they have communicated the first opportunity to their schoolfellows. I could add much more on this head from authentic sources.

To such as have investigated the different sources of the increasing corruptions among the fair sex, it is well known that many, very many, of those unhappy females that are now sunk so deep in vice and infamy, and the worst degree of misery, had their pure minds first tainted at *Boarding-Schools*.

Thousands also of those poor miserable beings just mentioned, who are hourly blaspheming their God, and cursing their own wretched existence, might possibly have escaped from those schools of vice with their minds uncontaminated by the taint of lewdness; yet, it is hardly possible that they should avoid pride and extravagance. This epidemic contagion rages in all those seminaries. Lewdness has destroyed its thousands; pride and extravagance its tens of thousands.

“Hence beauteous wretches, (beauty’s foul disgrace !)

“Tho’ born the pride, the shame of human race ;

“Fair

---

\* By a late trial it appeared, that obscene pictures were hawked from school to school, and that the governesses of schools were some of them purchasers. This letter was wrote six months before that trial. I think it is ten years since I was informed of the practice hinted at above.



“ Fair wretches hence, who nightly streets annoy,  
 “ Live but themselves and others to destroy.”

Never were there so many batchelors in every part of the united kingdom as at present; every rank of females are so infected with idleness, pride, extravagance, and the love of dissipation, that many men, even in the higher circles, and thousands in the middle ranks of society, are really afraid to marry, lest their wives by their thoughtless, careless, dissipated turn of mind; their love of shew, and expence in dress and ornaments, &c. and their neglect of domestic concerns, should reduce them to a state of beggary.

There are thousands of men who have souls formed to enjoy the tender, endearing, and delightful sensations that are only to be found in domestic society; who, being induced to forego what constitutes man's chiefest temporal happiness, console themselves for this immense loss, by madly flying to the arms of prostitution and disease. May not many of those cases of disgrace and informing, that for some years have been so often brought into our civil courts, be traced to this source? I think nothing can be more evident.

Every one is struck with the surprising contrast between the manners, way of life, &c. of ancient and modern ladies. Solomon in characterizing an harlot, says, *Her feet abide not in her own house.* St. Paul says, *Women should be keepers at home;* but it has been remarked by some one, that if a lady now happens to be at home one evening, it is so uncommon a circumstance, that she sends notice of the extraordinary event to all her acquaintance. In Solomon's days the ladies used to rise in the morning before our ladies go to bed. I cannot help transcribing a few lines from his description of a valuable wife, as a contrast to our modern

modern ladies. *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.—She will do him good ALL the days of her life.—She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.—She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.—She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands to hold the distaff.—She maketh fine linen and selleth it.—She considereth a field and buyeth it, with the fruit of her hands.—She planteth a vineyard.—Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.—She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.—Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also praiseth her.*

Euripides in his *Troades* makes Andromache say,

---

Once the wife  
Of noble Hector, and by all admir'd,  
With cheerful heart I practis'd every virtue  
Peculiar to my station and my sex,  
Which gave a dignity to private life;  
And in my husband's absence never left  
His house, pursuing vain amusements,  
The bane and ruin of a female mind;  
But spent my time at home, nor did I listen  
To idle impertinent discourse;  
But by submissive silence, gentle looks,  
Obliging manners, and endearing charms  
Of meek-ey'd modesty. I won his heart:  
Long time most happily with him I liv'd,  
Both giving and receiving daily proof  
Of pure affection and sincere regard.

BANISTER.

Now dissipation drives her whirling car  
In courts to shine, or flaunt in masquerade;  
Her blazing torches glitter from afar,  
And pour meridian day on midnight shade.

MAURICE.

Your's.

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## ERRATA.

Page 11, seventh line of poetry, for *haste*, read *hate*.—P. 13, cross out the word *the* in the poetry.—P. 15, fourth line from the bottom, for *cut* read *eat*.—P. 27, third line, read *Hurdis*, B. D. seventh l. for *begin* read *began*, twenty-first l. for *cropped* read *crossed*.—P. 52, line thirty-first, for *Pilgrim's* read *Pilgrim*.—P. 56, fifth line, for *your* read *Their*.—P. 73, fifth line of poetry, for *left* read *self*.—P. 91, line thirteen, instead of *the soul* read *Saul*.—The 12th and 13th line in page 187, have been transposed; they should have been inserted after line 14th in page 186.



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